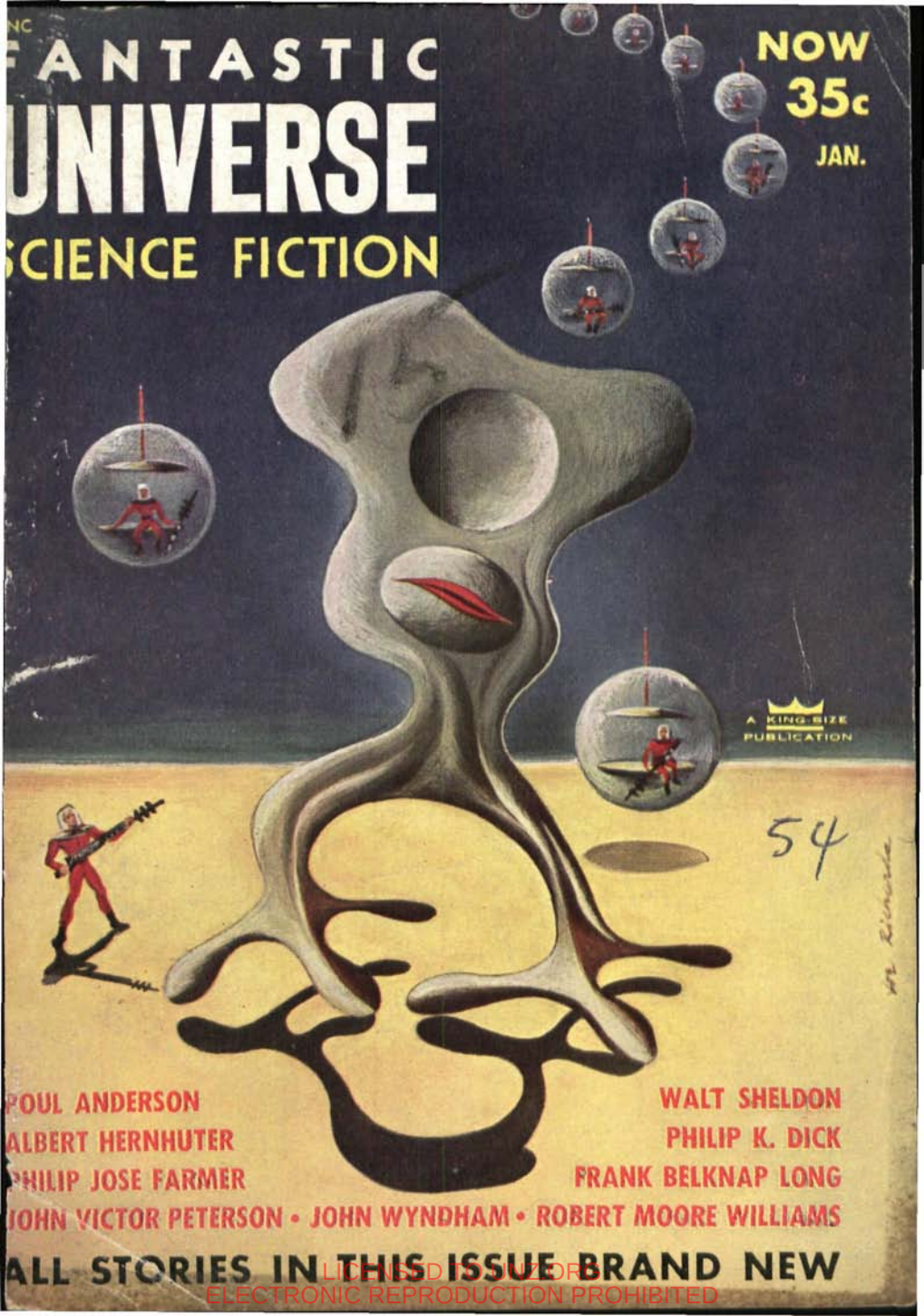


LICENSED TO MEDRA
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SCIENCE AND FANTASY

One of the most interesting and exciting elements of our times is the way recent scientific discoveries have brought about a merging of fact and fantasy to a point where there seems to be a scientific basis for the most imaginative speculations of the fantasists.

Take the old wives tales about ghosts and spirits that walk, the apparently inexplicable things that have been revealed at seances by well-known spiritualists working with sensitive mediums. There have been countless stories of mysterious happenings witnessed by people of good reputation for the truth. Today many of those mysteries, formerly scoffed at by the scientists, are accepted by those same scientific minds as having factual scientific basis.

Beyond doubt, certain human beings are capable of releasing a form of invisible energy that can ring bells, tip tables and fling objects about a room. Can it be that the spirit of man—that element which seems to leave the human body when the heart stops beating—is actually a part of the matter of which the earth is composed, matter released by death to move into space—into another dimension—but remains on this planet and can still be controlled by a "sensitive" mind and on occasion brought so close to the realities of the living that it can once again, through the unconscious mind of a medium, pick up objects and hurl them across rooms, open doors, drag chains, etc.

Perhaps it is only that those people who are "sensitive" enough to be mediums are humans whose bodies contain sufficient quantities of certain of the elements of which the body is composed that, under certain conditions generate electric energy which affects even inanimate objects within a certain area around them. These elements might make possible the phenomenon known as mind-reading, for instance.

Electricity, although widely used in our daily lives, remains as much a mystery as mental waves that make it possible for some people to read other people's minds.

Today some of our most eminent scientists say quite firmly that, as scientists, they are now convinced that there is such a thing as a divine spirit, that eventually every scientist in his experiments with the elements of nature, comes up against things that cannot be explained scientifically. This is an important and exciting development for it suggests the possibility that anything man can dream of in the realm of his fantasy has or does exist on this planet or in the atmosphere around it.

We feel that a magazine of science fiction is incomplete without stories of fantasy. Where science leaves off and fantasy begins no man, apparently, can be sure. And it will never cease to excite the minds of imaginative men and women, that speculation that even the most remote possibilities may be reality too.

—The Editor.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FANTASTIC UNIVERSE

JANUARY 1954
Vol. 1, No. 4

The Sensitive Man 2
by Poul Anderson

Jimsy and the Monsters 49
by Walt Sheldon

Never on Mars 62
by John Wyndham

They Twinkled Like Jewels 81
by Philip José Farmer

The Gambling Ghost 96
by Dal Stivens

Beyond the Door 101
by Philip K. Dick

Lost in the Future 107
by John Victor Peterson

The Record of Currupira 110
by Robert Abernathy

The Odyssey of Sam Meecham 122
by Charles E. Fritch

Texas Week 130
by Albert Hernhuter

The Man the Martians Made 133
by Frank Belknap Long

Be It Ever Thus 150
by Robert Moore Williams

H. L. Herbert
President

Leo Margulies
Publisher

Beatrice Jones
Editor

Joe Richards
Cover Design

FANTASTIC UNIVERSE, VOL. 1, NO. 4, published bi-monthly by KING-SIZE PUBLICATIONS, INC., H. L. HERBERT, President. Executive and editorial offices 471 Park Ave., N. Y. 22, N. Y. Subscriptions 6 issues $2.00, single copies 35c; Canadian and foreign postage extra. The characters in this magazine are entirely fictitious and have no relation to any persons living or dead. Copyright, 1953, by KING-SIZE PUBLICATIONS, INC. JANUARY 1954. PRINTED IN USA.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the sensitive man

by . . . Poul Anderson

One man stood between a power-hungry cabal and world mastery —but a man of unusual talents.

THE Mermaid Tavern had been elaborately decorated. Great blocks of hewn coral for pillars and booths, tarpon and barracuda on the walls, murals of Neptune and his court—including an outsize animated picture of a mermaid ballet, quite an eye-catcher. But the broad quartz windows showed merely a shifting greenish-blue of seawater, and the only live fish visible were in an aquarium across from the bar. Pacific Colony lacked the grotesque loveliness of the Florida and Cuba settlements. Here they were somehow a working city, even in their recreations.

The sensitive man paused for a moment in the foyer, sweeping the big circular room with a hurried glance. Less than half the tables were filled. This was an hour of interregnum, while the twelve to eighteen hundred shift was still at work and the others had long finished their more expensive amusements. There would always be a few around, of course — Dalgetty typed them as he watched.

A party of engineers, probably arguing about the compression strength of the latest submarine

Conspiracy seems to be as much a part of our times as it was in the times of Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot. Hence it finds frequent reflection in all branches of fiction, including science fiction. Yet, as in life, something new has been added, the most gigantic conspiracy of all, the human conspiracy against conspirators. Which makes for a fine stirring story in this short novel of the future by Mr. Anderson, one of our best young authors.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tank to judge from the bored expressions of the three or four rec girls who had joined them. A biochemist, who seemed to have forgotten his plankton and seaweed for the time being and to have focussed his mind on the pretty young clerk with him. A couple of hard-handed caissoniers, settling down to some serious drinking.

A maintenance man, a computerman, a tank pilot, a diver, a sea rancher, a bevy of stenographers, a bunch of very obvious tourists, more chemists and metallurgists—the sensitive man dismissed them all. There were others he couldn't classify with any decent probability but after a second's hesitation he decided to ignore them too. That left only the group with Thomas Bancroft.

They were sitting in one of the coral grottos, a cave of darkness to ordinary vision. Dalgetty had to squint to see in and the muted light of the tavern was a harsh glare when his pupils were so distended. But, yes—it was Bancroft all right and there was an empty booth adjoining his.

Dalgetty relaxed his eyes to normal perception. Even in the short moment of dilation the fluoros had given him a headache. He blocked it off from consciousness and started across the floor.

A hostess stopped him with a touch on the arm as he was about to enter the vacant cavern. She was young, an iridescent mantrap in her brief uniform. With all the money flowing into Pacific Colony they could afford decorative help here.

"I'm sorry, sir," she said. "Those are kept for parties. Would you like a table?"

"I'm a party," he answered, "or can soon become one." He moved aside a trifle so that none of the Bancroft group should happen to look out and see him. "If you could arrange some company for me . . ." He fumbled out a C-note, wondering just how such things could be done gracefully.

"Why, of course, sir." She took it with a smoothness he envied and handed him a stunning smile in return. "Just make yourself comfortable."

Dalgetty stepped into the grotto with a fast movement. This wasn't going to be simple. The rough red walls closed in on top of him, forming a space big enough for twenty people or so. A few strategically placed fluoros gave an eerie undersea light, just enough to see by—but no one could look in. A heavy curtain could be drawn if one wanted to be absolutely secluded. Privacy—*uh*-huh!

He sat down at the driftwood table and leaned back against the coral. Closing his eyes he made an effort of will. His nerves were already keyed up to such a tautness that it seemed they must break and it took only seconds to twist his mind along the paths required.

The noise of the tavern rose from a tiny mumble to a clatter-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing surf, to a huge and saw-edged wave. Voices dinned in his head, shrill and deep, hard and soft, a senseless stream of talking, jumbled together into words, words, words. Somebody dropped a glass and it was like a bomb going off.

Dalgetty winced, straining his ear against the grotto side. Surely enough of their speech would come to him, even through all that rock! The noise level was high but the human mind, if trained in concentration, is an efficient filter. The outside racket receded from Dalgetty's awareness and slowly he gathered in the trickle of sound.

First man: "—no matter. What can they do?"

Second man: "Complain to the government. Do you want the FBI on our trail? I don't."

First man: "Take it easy. They haven't yet done so and it's been a good week now since—"

Second man: "How do you know they haven't?"

Third man—heavy, authoritative voice. Yes, Dalgetty remembered it now from TV speeches—it was Bancroft himself: "*I* know. I've got enough connections to be sure of that."

Second man: "Okay, so they haven't reported it. But why not?"

Bancroft: "You know why. They don't want the government mixing into this any more than we do."

Woman: "Well, then, are they just going to sit and take it? No, they'll find some way to—"

"HELLO, THERE, MISTER!!!"

Dalgetty jumped and whirled around. His heart began to race until he felt his ribs tremble and he cursed his own tension.

"WHY, WHAT'S THE MATTER, MISTER? YOU LOOK—"

Effort again, forcing the volume down, grasping the thunderous heart in fingers of command and dragging it toward rest. He focussed his eyes on the girl who had entered. It was the rec girl, the one he had asked for because he had to sit in this booth.

Her voice was speaking on an endurable level now. Another pretty little bit of fluff. He smiled shakily. "Sit down, sweet. I'm sorry. My nerves are shot. What'll you have?"

"A daiquiri, please." She smiled and placed herself beside him. He dialed on the dispenser—the cocktail for her, a scotch and soda for himself.

"You're new here," she said. "Have you just been hired or are you a visitor?" Again the smile. "My name's Glenna."

"Call me Joe," said Dalgetty. His first name was actually Simon. "No, I'll only be here a short while."

"Where you from?" she asked. "I'm clear from New Jersey myself."

"Proving that nobody is ever born in California." He grinned. The control was asserting itself, his racing emotions were checked and he could think clearly again. "I'm—uh—just a floater. Don't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have any real address right now."

The dispenser ejected the drinks on a tray and flashed the charge — $20. Not bad, considering everything. He gave the machine a fifty and it made change, a five-buck coin and a bill.

"Well," said Glenna, "here's to you."

"And you." He touched glasses, wondering how to say what he had to say. Damn it, he couldn't sit here just talking or necking, he'd come to listen but . . . A sardonic montage of all the detective shows he had ever seen winked through his mind. The amateur who rushes in and solves the case, *heigh-ho*. He had never appreciated all the detail involved till now.

There was hesitation in him. He decided that a straightforward approach was his best bet. Deliberately then he created a cool confidence. Subconsciously he feared this girl, alien as she was to his class. All right, force the reaction to the surface, recognize it, suppress it. Under the table his hands moved in the intricate symbolic pattern which aided such emotion-harnessing.

"Glenna," he said, "I'm afraid I'll be rather dull company. The fact is I'm doing some research in psychology, learning how to concentrate under different conditions. I wanted to try it in a place like this, you understand." He slipped out a 2-C bill and laid it before her. "If you'd just sit here quietly it won't be for more than an hour I guess."

"Huh?" Her brows lifted. Then, with a shrug and a wry smile, "Okay, you're paying for it." She took a cigarette from the flat case at her sash, lit it and relaxed. Dalgetty leaned against the wall and closed his eyes again.

The girl watched him curiously. He was of medium height, stockily built, inconspicuously dressed in a blue short-sleeved tunic, gray slacks and sandals. His square snub-nosed face was lightly freckled, with hazel eyes and a rather pleasant shy smile. The rusty hair was close-cropped. A young man, she guessed, about twenty-five, quite ordinary and uninteresting except for the wrestler's muscles and, of course, his behavior.

Oh, well, it took all kinds.

Dalgetty had a moment of worry. Not because the yarn he had handed her was thin but because it brushed too close to the truth. He thrust the unsureness out of him. Chances were she hadn't understood any of it, wouldn't even mention it. At least not to the people he was hunting.

Or who were hunting him?

Concentration, and the voices slowly came again: "— maybe. But I think they'll be more stubborn than that."

Bancroft: "Yes. The issues are too large for a few lives to matter. Still, Michael Tighe is only human. He'll talk."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The woman: "He can be made to talk, you mean?" She had one of the coldest voices Dalgetty had ever heard.

Bancroft: "Yes. Though I hate to use extreme measures."

Man: "What other possibilities have we got? He won't say anything unless he's forced to. And meanwhile his people will be scouring the planet to find him. They're a shrewd bunch."

Bancroft, sardonically: "What can they do, please? It takes more than an amateur to locate a missing man. It calls for all the resources of a large police organization. And the last thing they want, as I've said before, is to bring the government in on this."

The woman: "I'm not so sure of that, Tom. After all, the Institute is a legal group. It's government sponsored and its influence is something tremendous. Its graduates—"

Bancroft: "It educates a dozen different kinds of psychotechnicians, yes. It does research. It gives advice. It publishes findings and theories. But believe me the Psychotechnic Institute is like an iceberg. Its real nature and purpose are hidden way under water. No, it isn't doing anything illegal that I know of. Its aims are so large that they transcend law altogether."

Man: "What aims?"

Bancroft: "I wish I knew. We've only got hints and guesses, you know. One of the reasons we've snatched Tighe is to find out more. I suspect that their real work requires secrecy."

The woman, thoughtfully: "Y-y-yes, I can see how that might be. If the world at large were aware of being—manipulated—then manipulation might become impossible. But just where does Tighe's group want to lead us?"

Bancroft: "I don't know, I tell you. I'm not even sure that they do want to—take over. Something even bigger than that." A sigh. "Let's face it, Tighe is a crusader too. In his own way he's a very sincere idealist. He just happens to have the wrong ideals. That's one reason why I'd hate to see him harmed."

Man: "But if it turns out that we've got to—"

Bancroft: "Why, then we've got to, that's all. But I won't enjoy it."

Man: "Okay, you're the leader, you say when. But I warn you not to wait too long. I tell you the Institute is more than a collection of unworldly scientists. They've got *someone* out searching for Tighe and if they should locate him there could be real trouble."

Bancroft, mildly: "Well, these are troubled times, or will be shortly. We might as well get used to that."

The conversation drifted away into idle chatter. Dalgetty groaned to himself. Not once had they spoken of the place where their prisoner was kept.

All right, little man, what next?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thomas Bancroft was big game. His law firm was famous. He had been in Congress and the Cabinet. Even with the Labor Party in power he was a respected elder statesman. He had friends in government, business, unions, guilds and clubs and leagues from Maine to Hawaii. He had only to say the word and Dalgetty's teeth would be kicked in some dark night. Or, if he proved squeamish, Dalgetty might find himself arrested on a charge like conspiracy and tied up in court for the next six months.

By listening in he had confirmed the suspicion of Ulrich at the Institute that Thomas Bancroft was Tighe's kidnapper—but that was no help. If he went to the police with that story they would (a) laugh, long and loud—(b) lock him up for psychiatric investigation—(c) worst of all, pass the story on to Bancroft, who would thereby know what the Institute's children could do and would take appropriate countermeasures.

II

Of course, this was just the beginning. The trail was long. But time was hideously short before they began turning Tighe's brain inside out. And there were wolves along the trail.

For a shivering instant, Simon Dalgetty realized what he had let himself in for.

It seemed like forever before the Bancroft crowd left. Dalgetty's eyes followed them out of the bar — four men and the woman. They were all quiet, mannerly, distinguished-looking, in rich dark slack suits. Even the hulking bodyguard was probably a college graduate, Third Class. You wouldn't take them for murderers and kidnappers and the servants of those who would bring back political gangsterism. But then, reflected Dalgetty, they probably didn't think of themselves in that light either.

The enemy—the old and protean enemy, who had been fought down as Fascist, Nazi, Shintoist, Communist, Atomist, Americanist and God knew what else for a bloody century — had grown craftier with time. Now he could fool even himself.

Dalgetty's senses went back to normal. It was a sudden immense relief to be merely sitting in a dimly-lit booth with a pretty girl, to be no more than human for a while. But his sense of mission was still dark within him.

"Sorry I was so long," he said. "Have another drink."

"I just had one." She smiled.

He noticed the $10-figure glowing on the dispenser and fed it two coins. Then, his nerves still vibrating, he dialed another whiskey for himself.

"You know those people in the next grotto?" asked Glenna. "I saw you watching them leave."

"Well, I know Mr. Bancroft by reputation," he said. "He lives here, doesn't he?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"He's got a place over on Gull Station," she said, "but he's not here very much, mostly on the mainland, I guess."

Dalgetty nodded. He had come to Pacific Colony two days before, had been hanging around in the hope of getting close enough to Bancroft to pick up a clue. Now he had done so-and his findings were worth little. He had merely confirmed what the Institute already considered highly probable without getting any new information.

He needed to think over his next move. He drained his drink. "I'd better jet off," he said.

"We can have dinner in here if you want," said Glenna.

"Thanks, I'm not hungry." That was true enough. The nervous tension incidental to the use of his powers raised the devil with appetite. Nor could he be too lavish with his funds. "Maybe later."

"Okay, Joe, I might be seeing you." She smiled. "You're a funny one. But kind of nice." Her lips brushed his and then she got up and left. Dalgetty went out the door and punched for a topside elevator.

It took him past many levels. The tavern was under the station's caissons near the main anchor cable, looking out into deep water. Above it were storehouses, machine rooms, kitchens, all the paraphernalia of modern existence. He stepped out of a kiosk onto an upper deck, thirty feet above the surface. Nobody else was there and he walked over to the railing and leaned on it, looking across the water and savoring loneliness.

Below him the tiers dropped away to the main deck, flowing lines and curves, broad sheets of clear plastic, animated signs, the grass and flowerbeds of a small park, people walking swiftly or idly. The huge gyro-stabilized bulk did not move noticeably to the long Pacific swell. Pelican Station was the colony's "downtown," its shops and theaters and restaurants, service and entertainment.

Around it the water was indigo blue in the evening light, streaked with arabesques of foam, and he could hear waves rumble against the sheer walls. Overhead the sky was tall with a few clouds in the west turning aureate. The hovering gulls seemed cast in gold. A haziness in the darkened east betokened the southern California coastline. He breathed deeply, letting nerves and muscles and viscera relax, shutting off his mind and turning for a while into an organism that merely lived and was glad to live.

Dalgetty's view in all directions was cut off by the other stations, the rising streamlined hulks which were Pacific Colony. A few airy flex-strung bridges had been completed to link them, but there was still an extensive boat traffic. To the south he could see a blackness on the water that was a sea ranch. His trained memory told

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him, in answer to a fleeting question, that according to the latest figures eighteen-point-three percent of the world's food supply was now being derived from modified strains of seaweed. The percentage would increase rapidly, he knew.

Elsewhere were mineral-extracting plants, fishery bases, experimental and pure-research stations. Below the floating city, digging into the continental shelf, was the underwater settlement—oil wells to supplement the industrial synthesizing process, mining, exploration in tanks to find new resources, a slow growth outward as men learned how to go deeper into cold and darkness and pressure. It was expensive but an overcrowded world had little choice.

Venus was already visible, low and pure on the dusking horizon. Dalgetty breathed the wet pungent sea-air into his lungs and thought with some pity of the men out there—and on the Moon, on Mars, between worlds. They were doing a huge and heartbreaking job—but he wondered if it were bigger and more meaningful than this work here in Earth's oceans.

Or a few pages of scribbled equations, tossed into a desk drawer at the Institute. Enough. Dalgetty brought his mind to heel like a harshly trained dog. He was also here to work.

The forces he must encounter seemed monstrous. He was one man, alone against he knew not what kind of organization. He had to rescue one other man before — well, before history was changed and spun off on the wrong course, the long downward path. He had his knowledge and abilities but they wouldn't stop a bullet. Nor did they include education for this kind of warfare. War that was not war, politics that were not politics but a handful of scrawled equations and a bookful of slowly gathered data and a brainful of dreams.

Bancroft had Tighe — somewhere. The Institute could not ask the government for help, even if to a large degree the Institute was the government. It could, perhaps, send Dalgetty a few men but it had no goon squads. And time was like a hound on his heels.

The sensitive man turned, suddenly aware of someone else. This was a middle-aged fellow, gaunt and gray-haired, with an intellectual cast of feature. He leaned on the rail and said quietly, "Nice evening, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Dalgetty. "Very nice."

"It gives me a feeling of real accomplishment, this place," said the stranger.

"How so?" asked Dalgetty, not unwilling to make conversation.

The man looked out over the sea and spoke softly as if to himself. "I'm fifty years old. I was born during World War Three and grew up with the famines

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the mass insanities that followed. I saw fighting myself in Asia. I worried about a senselessly expanding population pressing on senselessly diminished resources. I saw an America that seemed equally divided between decadence and madness.

"And yet I can stand now and watch a world where we've got a functioning United Nations, where population increase is leveling off and democratic government spreading to country after country, where we're conquering the seas and even going out to other planets. Things have changed since I was a boy but on the whole it's been for the better."

"Ah," said Dalgetty, "a kindred spirit. Though I'm afraid it's not quite that simple."

The man arched his brows. "So you vote conservative?"

"The Labor Party *is* conservative," said Dalgetty. "As proof of which it's in coalition with the Republicans and the Neofederalists as well as some splinter groups. No, I don't care if it stays in, or if the Conservatives prosper or the Liberals take over. The question is—who shall control the group in power?"

"Its membership, I suppose," said the man.

"But just who is its membership? You know as well as I do that the great failing of the American people has always been their lack of interest in politics."

"What? Why, they vote, don't they? What was the last percentage?"

"Eight-eight-point-three-seven. Sure they vote—once the ticket has been presented to them. But how many of them have anything to do with nominating the candidates or writing the platforms? How many will actually take time out to *work* at it—or even to write their Congressmen? 'Ward heeler' is still a term of contempt.

"All too often in our history the vote has been simply a matter of choosing between two well-oiled machines. A sufficiently clever and determined group can take over a party, keep the name and the slogans and in a few years do a complete behind-the-scenes *volte-face.*" Dalgetty's words came fast, this was one facet of a task to which he had given his life.

"Two machines," said the stranger, "or four or five as we've got now, are at least better than one."

"Not if the same crowd controls all of them," Dalgetty said grimly.

"But—"

" 'If you can't lick 'em, join 'em.' Better yet, join all sides. Then you *can't* lose."

"I don't think that's happened yet," said the man.

"No it hasn't," said Dalgetty, "not in the United States, though in some other countries—never mind. It's still in process of happening, that's all. The lines today are drawn not by nations or par-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ties, but by—philosophies, if you wish. Two views of man's destiny, cutting across all national, political, racial and religious lines."

"And what are those two views?" asked the stranger quietly.

"You might call them libertarian and totalitarian, though the latter don't necessarily think of themselves as such. The peak of rampant individualism was reached in the nineteenth century, legally speaking. Though in point of fact social pressure and custom were more strait-jacketing than most people today realize.

"In the twentieth century that social rigidity — in manners, morals, habits of thought — broke down. The emancipation of women, for instance, or the easy divorce or the laws about privacy. But at the same time legal control began tightening up again. Government took over more and more functions, taxes got steeper, the individual's life got more and more bound by regulations saying 'thou shalt' and 'thou shalt not.'

"Well, it looks as if war is going out as an institution. That takes off a lot of pressure. Such hampering restrictions as conscription to fight or work, or rationing, have been removed. What we're slowly attaining is a society where the individual has maximum freedom, both from law *and* custom. It's perhaps farthest advanced in America, Canada, and Brazil, but it's growing the world over.

"But there are elements which don't like the consequences of genuine libertarianism. And the new science of human behavior, mass and individual, is achieving rigorous formulation. It's becoming the most powerful tool man has ever had—for whoever controls the human mind will also control all that man can do. That science can be used by anyone, mind you. If you'll read between the lines you'll see what a hidden struggle is shaping up for control of it as soon as it reaches maturity and empirical useability."

"Ah, yes," said the man. "The Psychotechnic Institute."

Dalgetty nodded, wondering why he had jumped into such a lecture. Well, the more people who had some idea of the truth the better—though it wouldn't do for them to know the whole truth either. Not yet.

"The Institute trains so many for governmental posts and does so much advisory work," said the man, "that sometimes it looks almost as if it were quietly taking over the whole show."

Dalgetty shivered a little in the sunset breeze and wished he'd brought his cloak. He thought wearily, *Here it is again. Here is the story they are spreading, not in blatant accusations, not all at once, but slowly and subtly, a whisper here, a hint there, a slanted news story, a supposedly dispassionate article . . . Oh, yes, they know their applied semantics.*

"Too many people fear such

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an outcome," he declared. "It just isn't true. The Institute is a private research organization with a Federal grant. Its records are open to anyone."

"All the records?" The man's face was vague in the gathering twilight.

Dalgetty thought he could make out a skeptically lifted brow. He didn't reply directly but said, "There's a foggy notion in the public mind that a group equipped with a complete science of man—which the Institute hasn't got by a long shot—could 'take over' at once and, by manipulations of some unspecified but frightfully subtle sort, rule the world. The theory is that if you know just what buttons to push and so on, men will do precisely as you wish without knowing that they're being guided. The theory happens to be pure jetwash."

"Oh, I don't know," said the man. "In general terms it sounds pretty plausible."

Dalgetty shook his head. "Suppose I were an engineer," he said, "and suppose I saw an avalanche coming down on me. I might know exactly what to do to stop it—where to plant my dynamite, where to build my concrete wall and so on. Only the knowledge wouldn't help me. I'd have neither the time nor the strength to use it.

"The situation is similar with regard to human dynamics, both mass and individual. It takes months or years to change a man's convictions and when you have hundreds of millions of men/. . ." He shrugged. "Social currents are too large for all but the slightest, most gradual control. In fact perhaps the most valuable results obtained to date are not those which show what can be done but what cannot."

"You speak with the voice of authority," said the man.

"I'm a psychologist," said Dalgetty truthfully enough. He didn't add that he was also a subject, observer and guinea pig in one. "And I'm afraid I talk too much. Go from bad to voice."

"Ouch," said the man. He leaned his back against the rail and his shadowy hand extended a pack. "Smoke?"

"No, thanks, I don't."

"You're a rarity." The brief lighter-flare etched the stranger's face against the dusk.

"I've found other ways of relaxing."

"Good for you. By the way I'm a professor myself. English Litt at Colorado."

"Afraid I'm rather a roughneck in that respect," said Dalgetty. For a moment he had a sense of loss. His thought processes had become too far removed from the ordinary human for him to find much in fiction or poetry. But music, sculpture, painting—there was something else. He looked over the broad glimmering water, at the stations dark against the first stars, and savored the many symmetries and harmonies with a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

real pleasure. You needed senses like his before you could know what a lovely world this was.

"I'm on vacation now," said the man. Dalgetty did not reply in kind. After a moment—"You are too, I suppose?"

Dalgetty felt a slight shock. A personal question from a stranger—well, you didn't expect otherwise from someone like the girl Glenna but a professor should be better conditioned to privacy customs.

"Yes," he said shortly. "Just visiting."

"By the way, my name is Tyler, Harmon Tyler."

"Joe Thomson." Dalgetty shook hands with him.

"We might continue our conversation if you're going to be around for awhile," said Tyler. "You raised some interesting points."

Dalgetty considered. It would be worthwhile staying as long as Bancroft did, in the hope of learning some more. "I may be here a couple of days yet," he said.

"Good," said Tyler. He looked up at the sky. It was beginning to fill with stars. The deck was still empty. It ran around the dim upthrusting bulk of a weather-observation tower which was turned over to its automatics for the night and there was no one else to be seen. A few fluoros cast wan puddles of luminance on the plastic flooring.

Glancing at his watch, Tyler said casually, "It's about nineteen-thirty hours now. If you don't mind waiting till twenty hundred I can show you something interesting."

"What's that?"

"Ah, you'll be surprised." Tyler chuckled. "Not many people know about it. Now, getting back to that point you raised earlier. . ."

The half hour passed swiftly. Dalgetty did most of the talking.

"—and mass action. Look, to a rather crude first approximation a state of semantic equilibrium on a world-wide scale, which of course has never existed, would be represented by an equation of the form—"

"Excuse me." Tyler consulted the shining dial again. "If you don't mind stopping for a few minutes I'll show you that odd sight I was talking about."

"Eh? Oh—oh, sure."

Tyler threw away his cigarette. It was a tiny meteor in the gloom. He took Dalgetty's arm. They walked slowly around the weather tower.

The men came from the opposite side and met them halfway. Dalgetty had hardly seen them before he felt the sting in his chest.

A needle gun!

The world roared about him. He took a step forward, trying to scream, but his throat locked. The deck lifted up and hit him and his mind whirled toward darkness.

From somewhere will rose within him, trained reflexes worked,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he summoned all that was left of his draining strength and fought the anesthetic. His wrestling with it was a groping in fog. Again and again he spiraled into unconsciousness and rose strangling. Dimly, through nightmare, he was aware of being carried. Once someone stopped the group in a corridor and asked what was wrong. The answer seemed to come from immensely far away. "I dunno. He passed out—just like that. We're taking him to a doctor."

There was a century spent going down some elevator. The boat-house walls trembled liquidly around him. He was carried aboard a large vessel, it was not visible through the gray mist. Some dulled portion of himself thought that this was obviously a private boathouse, since no one was trying to stop—trying to stop—trying to stop . . .

Then the night came.

III

He woke slowly, with a dry retch, and blinked his eyes open. Noise of air, he was flying, it must have been a triphibian they took him onto. He tried to force recovery but his mind was still too paralyzed.

"Here. Drink this."

Dalgetty took the glass and gulped thirstily. It was coolness and steadiness spreading through him. The vibratto within him faded, and the headache dulled enough to be endurable. Slowly he looked around, and felt the first crawl of panic.

No! He suppressed the emotion with an almost physical thrust. Now was the time for calm and quick wit and—

A big man near him nodded and stuck his head out the door. "He's okay now, I guess," he called. "Want to talk to him?"

Dalgetty's eyes roved the compartment. It was a rear cabin in a large airboat, luxuriously furnished with reclining seats and an inlaid table. A broad window looked out on the stairs.

Caught! It was pure bitterness, an impotent rage at himself. *Walked right into their arms!*

Tyler came into the room, followed by a pair of burly stone-faced men. He smiled. "Sorry," he murmured, "but you're playing out of your league, you know."

"Yeah." Dalgetty shook his head. Wryness twisted his mouth. "I don't league it much either."

Tyler grinned. It was a sympathetic expression. "You punsters are incurable," he said. "I'm glad you're taking it so well. We don't intend any harm to you."

Skepticism was dark in Dalgetty but he managed to relax. "How'd you get onto me?" he asked."

"Oh, various ways. You were pretty clumsy, I'm afraid." Tyler sat down across the table. The guards remained standing. "We were sure the Institute would attempt a counterblow and we've studied it and its personnel

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thoroughly. You were recognized, Dalgetty—and you're known to be very close to Tighe. So you walked after us without even a face-mask . . .

"At any rate, you were noticed hanging around the colony. We checked back on your movements. One of the rec girls had some interesting things to tell of you. We decided you'd better be questioned. I sounded you out as much as a casual acquaintance could and then took you to the rendezvous." Tyler spread his hands. "That's all."

Dalgetty sighed and his shoulders slumped under a sudden enormous burden of discouragement. Yes, they were right. He was out of his orbit. "Well," he said, "what now?"

"Now we have you *and* Tighe," said the other. He took out a cigarette. "I hope you're somewhat more willing to talk than he is."

"Suppose I'm not?"

"Understand this." Tyler frowned. "There are reasons for going slow with Tighe. He has hostage value, for one thing. But you're nobody. And while we aren't monsters I for one have little sympathy to spare for your kind of fanatic."

"Now there," said Dalgetty with a lift of sardonicism, "is an interesting example of semantic evolution. This being, on the whole, an easy-going tolerant period, the word 'fanatic' has come to be simply an epithet—a fellow on the other side."

"That will do," snapped Tyler. "You won't be allowed to stall. There are questions we want answered." He ticked the points off on his fingers. "What are the Institute's ultimate aims? How is it going about attaining them? How far has it gotten? Precisely what has it learned, in a scientific way, that it hasn't published? How much does it know about us?" He smiled thinly. "You've always been close to Tighe. He raised you, didn't he? You should know just as much as he."

Yes, thought Dalgetty, *Tighe raised me. He was all the father I ever had, really. I was an orphan and he took me in and he was good.*

Sharp in his mind rose the image of the old house. It had lain on broad wooded grounds in the fair hills of Maine, with a little river running down to a bay winged with sailboats. There had been neighbors—quiet-spoken folk with something more real about them than most of today's rootless world knew. And there had been many visitors—men and women with minds like flickering sword-blades.

He had grown up among intellects aimed at the future. He and Tighe had traveled a lot. They had often been in the huge pylon of the main Institute building. They had gone over to Tighe's native England once a year at least. But always the old house had been dear to them.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It stood on a ridge, long and low and weathered gray like a part of the earth. By day it had rested in a green sun-dazzle of trees or a glistering purity of snow. By night you heard the boards creaking and the lonesome sound of wind talking down the chimney. Yes, it had been good.

And there had been the wonder of it. He loved his training. The horizonless world within himself was a glorious thing to explore. And that had oriented him outward to the real world—he had felt wind and rain and sunlight, the pride of high buildings and the surge of a galloping horse, thresh of waves and laughter of women and smooth mysterious purr of great machines, with a fullness that made him pity those deaf and dumb and blind around him.

Oh yes, he loved those things. He was in love with the whole turning planet and the big skies overhead. It was a world of light and strength and swift winds and it would be bitter to leave it. But Tighe was locked in darkness.

He said slowly, "All we ever were was a research and educational center, a sort of informal university specializing in the scientific study of man. We're not any kind of political organization. You'd be surprised how much we differ in our individual opinions."

"What of it?" shrugged Tyler. "This is something larger than politics. Your work, if fully developed, would change our whole society, perhaps the whole nature of man. We *know* you've learned more things than you've made public. Therefore you're reserving that information for uses of your own."

"And you want it for your purposes?"

"Yes," said Tyler. After a moment, "I despise melodrama but if you don't cooperate you're going to get the works. And we've got Tighe too, never forget that. One of you ought to break down if he watches the other being questioned."

We're going to the same place! We're going to Tighe!

The effort to hold face and voice steady was monstrous. "Just where are we bound?"

"An island. We should be there soon. I'll be going back again myself but Mr. Bancroft is coming shortly. That should convince you just how important this is to us."

Dalgetty nodded. "Can I think it over for awhile? It isn't an easy decision for me."

"Sure. I hope you decide right."

Tyler got up and left with his guards. The big man who had handed him the drink earlier sat where he had been all the time. Slowly the psychologist began to tighten himself. The faint drone of turbines and whistle of jets and sundered air began to enlarge.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"CAN'T TELL YOU THAT. SHUDDUP, WILL YOU?"

"But surely . . ."

The guard didn't answer. But

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he was thinking. *Ree-villa-ghee-gay-doe—never would p'rnounce that damn Spig name . . . cripes, what a God-forsaken hole! . . . Mebbe I can work a trip over to Mexico . . . That little gal in Guada . . .*

Dalgetty concentrated. Revilla—he had it now. Islas de Devillagigedo, a small group some 350 or 400 miles off the Mexican coast, little visited with very few inhabitants. His eidetic memory went to work, conjuring an image of a large-scale map he had once studied. Closing his eyes he laid off the exact distance, latitude and longitude, individual islands.

Wait, there was one a little further west, a speck on the map, not properly belonging to the group. And—he riffled through all the facts he had ever learned pertaining to Bancroft. Wait now, Bertrand Meade, who seemed to be the kingpin of the whole movement—yes, Meade owned that tiny island.

So that's where we're going! He sank back, letting weariness overrun him. It would be awhile yet before they arrived.

Dalgetty sighed and looked out at the stars. Why had men arranged such clumsy constellations when the total pattern of the sky was a big and lovely harmony? He knew his personal danger would be enormous once he was on the ground. Torture, mutilation, even death.

Dalgetty closed his eyes again. Almost at once he was asleep.

IV

They landed on a small field while it was still dark. Hustled out into a glare of lights Dalgetty did not have much chance to study his surroundings. There were men standing on guard with magnum rifles, tough-looking professional goons in loose gray uniforms. Dalgetty followed obediently across the concrete, along a walk and through a garden to the looming curved bulk of a house.

He paused just a second as the door opened for them and stood looking out into darkness. The sea rolled and hissed there on a wide beach. He caught the clean salt smell of it and filled his lungs. It might be the last time he ever breathed such air.

"Get along with you." An arm jerked him into motion again.

Down a bare coldly-lit hallway, down an escalator, into the guts of the island. Another door, a room beyond it, an ungentle shove. The door clashed to behind him.

Dalgetty looked around. The cell was small, bleakly furnished with bunk, toilet and washstand, had a ventilator grille in one wall. Nothing else. He tried listening with maximum sensitivity but there were only remote confused murmurs.

Dad! he thought. *You're here somewhere too.*

He flopped on the bunk and spent a moment analyzing the esthetics of the layout. It had a certain pleasing severity, the un-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conscious balance of complete functionalism. Soon Dalgetty went back to sleep.

A guard with a breakfast tray woke him. Dalgetty tried to read the man's thoughts but there weren't any to speak of. He ate ravenously under a gun muzzle, gave the tray back and returned to sleep. It was the same at lunch time.

His time-sense told him that it was 1435 hours when he was roused again. There were three men this time, husky specimens. "Come on," said one of them. "Never saw such a guy for pounding his ear."

Dalgetty stood up, running a hand through his hair. The red bristles were scratchy on his palm. It was a cover-up, a substitute symbol to bring his nervous system back under full control. The process felt as if he were being tumbled through a huge gulf.

"Just how many of your fellows are there here?" he asked.

"Enough. Now get going!"

He caught the whisper of thought—*fifty of us guards, is it? Yeah, fifty, I guess.*

Fifty! Dalgetty felt taut as he walked out between two of them. Fifty goons. And they were trained, he knew that. The Institute had learned that Bertrand Meade's private army was well-drilled. Nothing obtrusive about it—officially they were only servants and bodyguards—but they knew how to shoot.

And he was alone in mid-ocean with them. He was alone and no one knew where he was and anything could be done to him. He felt cold, walking down the corridor.

There was a room beyond with benches and a desk. One of the guards gestured to a chair at one end. "Sit," he grunted.

Dalgetty submitted. The straps went around his wrists and ankles, holding him to the arms and legs of the heavy chair. Another buckled about his waist. He looked down and saw that the chair was bolted to the floor. One of the guards crossed to the desk and started up a tape recorder.

A door opened in the far end of the room. Thomas Bancroft came in. He was a big man, fleshy but in well-scrubbed health, his clothes designed with quiet good taste. The head was white-maned, leonine, with handsome florid features and sharp blue eyes. He smiled ever so faintly and sat down behind the desk.

The woman was with him—Dalgetty looked harder at her. She was new to him. She was medium tall, a little on the compact side, her blond hair cut too short, no makeup on her broad Slavic features. Young, in hard condition, moving with a firm masculine stride. With those tilted gray eyes, that delicately curved nose and wide sullen mouth, she could have been a beauty had she wanted to be.

One of the modern type, thought Dalgetty. *A flesh-and-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

blood machine, trying to outmale men, frustrated and unhappy without knowing it and all the more bitter for that.

Briefly there was sorrow in him, an enormous pity for the millions of mankind. They did not know themselves, they fought themselves like wild beasts, tied up in knots, locked in nightmare. Man could be so much if he had the chance.

He glanced at Bancroft. "I know you," he said, "but I'm afraid the lady has the advantage of me."

"My secretary and general assistant, Miss Casimir." The politician's voice was sonorous, a beautifully controlled instrument. He leaned across the desk. The recorder by his elbow whirred in the flat soundproofed stillness.

"Mr. Dalgetty," he said, "I want you to understand that we aren't fiends. There are things too important for ordinary rules though. Wars have been fought over them in the past and may well be fought again. It will be easier for all concerned if you cooperate with us now. No one need ever know that you have done so."

"Suppose I answer your questions," said Dalgetty. "How do you know I'll be telling the truth?"

"Neoscopolamine, of course. I don't think you've been immunized. It confuses the mind too much for us to interrogate you about these complex matters under its influence but we will surely find out if you have been answering our present questions correctly."

"And what then? Do you just let me go?"

Bancroft shrugged. "Why shouldn't we? We may have to keep you here for awhile but soon you will have ceased to matter and can safely be released."

Dalgetty considered. Not even he could do much against truth drugs. And there were still more radical procedures, prefrontal lobotomy for instance. He shivered. The leatherite straps felt damp against his thin clothing.

He looked at Bancroft. "What do you really want?" he asked. "Why are you working for Bertrand Meade?"

Bancroft's heavy mouth lifted in a smile. "I thought you were supposed to answer the questions," he said.

"Whether I do or not depends on whose questions they are," said Dalgetty. *Stall for time! Put it off, the moment of terror, put it off!* "Frankly, what I know of Meade doesn't make me friendly. But I could be wrong."

"Mr. Meade is a distinguished executive."

"Uh-huh. He's also the power behind a hell of a lot of political figures, including you. He's the real boss of the Actionist movement."

"What do you know of that?" asked the woman sharply.

"It's a complicated story," said Dalgetty, "but essentially Actionism is a—a *Weltanschauung.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We're still recovering from the World Wars and their aftermath. People everywhere are swinging away from great vague capitalized causes toward a cooler and clearer view of life.

"It's analogous to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, which also followed a period of turmoil between conflicting fanaticisms. A belief in reason is growing up even in the popular mind, a spirit of moderation and tolerance. There's a wait-and-see attitude toward everything, including the sciences and particularly the new half-finished science of psychodynamics. The world wants to rest for awhile.

"Well, such a state of mind has its own drawbacks. It produces wonderful structures of thought but there's something cold about them. There is so little real passion, so much caution—the arts, for instance, are becoming ever more stylized. Old symbols like religion and the sovereign state and a particular form of government, for which men once died, are openly jeered at. We can formulate the semantic condition at the Institute in a very neat equation.

"And you don't like it. Your kind of man needs something big. And mere concrete bigness isn't enough. You could give your lives to the sciences or to interplanetary colonization or to social correction, as many people are cheerfully doing—but those aren't for you. Down underneath you miss the universal father-image.

"You want an almighty Church or an almighty State or an almighty *anything*, a huge misty symbol which demands everything you've got and gives in return only a feeling of belonging." Dalgetty's voice was harsh. "In short, you can't stand on your own psychic feet. You can't face the truth that man is a lonely creature and that his purpose must come from within himself."

Bancroft scowled. "I didn't come here to be lectured," he said.

"Have it your way," answered Dalgetty. "I thought you wanted to know what I knew of Actionism. That's it in unprecise verbal language. Essentially you want to be a Leader in a Cause. Your men, such as aren't merely hired, want to be Followers. Only there isn't a Cause around, these days, except the common-sense one of improving human life."

The woman, Casimir, leaned over the desk. There was a curious intensity in her eyes. "You just pointed out the drawbacks yourself," she said. "This *is* a decadent period."

"No," said Dalgetty. "Unless you insist on loaded connotations. It's a necessary period of rest. Recoil time for a whole society—well, it all works out neatly in Tighe's formulation. The present state of affairs should continue for about seventy-five years, we feel at the Institute. In that time, reason can—we hope—be so

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

firmly implanted in the basic structure of society that when the next great wave of passion comes it won't turn men against each other.

"The present is, well, analytic. While we catch our breath we can begin to understand ourselves. When the next synthetic—or creative or crusading period, if you wish—comes, it will be saner than all which have gone before. And man can't afford to go insane again. Not in the same world with the lithium bomb."

Bancroft nodded. "And you in the Institute are trying to control this process," he said. "You're trying to stretch out the period of —damn it, of decadence! Oh, I've studied the modern school system too, Dalgetty. I know how subtly the rising generation is being indoctrinated—through policies formulated by *your* men in the government."

"Indoctrinated? Trained, I would say. Trained in self-restraint and critical thinking." Dalgetty grinned with one side of his mouth. "Well, we aren't here to argue generalities. Specifically Meade feels he has a mission. He is the natural leader of America —ultimately, through the U.N., in which we are still powerful, the world. He wants to restore what he calls 'ancestral virtues'—you see, I've listened to his speeches and yours, Bancroft.

"These virtues consist of obedience, physical *and* mental, to 'constituted authority'—of 'dynamism,' which operationally speaking means people ought to jump when he gives an order—of . . . Oh, why go on? It's the old story. Power hunger, the recreation of the Absolute State, this time on a planetary scale.

"With psychological appeals to some and with promises of reward to others he's built up quite a following. But he's shrewd enough to know that he can't just stage a revolution. He has to make people want him. He has to reverse the social current until it swings back to authoritarianism—with him riding the crest.

"And that of course is where the Institute comes in. Yes, we have developed theories which make at least a beginning at explaining the facts of history. It was a matter not so much of gathering data as of inventing a rigorous self-correcting symbology and our paramathematics seems to be just that. We haven't published all of our findings because of the uses to which they could be put. If you know exactly how to go about it you can shape world society into almost any image you want—in fifty years or less! You want that knowledge of ours for your purposes!"

Dalgetty fell silent. There was a long quietness. His own breathing seemed unnaturally loud.

"All right." Bancroft nodded again, slowly. "You haven't told us anything we don't know."

"I'm well aware of that," said Dalgetty.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Your phrasing was rather unfriendly," said Bancroft. "What you don't appreciate is the revolting stagnation and cynicism of this age."

"Now you're using the loaded words," said Dalgetty. "Facts just *are*. There's no use passing moral judgments on reality, the only thing you can do is try to change it."

"Yes," said Bancroft. "All right then, we're trying. Do you want to help us?"

"You could beat the hell out of me," said Dalgetty, "but it wouldn't teach you a science that it takes years to learn."

"No, but we'd know just what you have and where to find it. We have some good brains on our side. Given your data and equations they can figure it out." The pale eyes grew wholly chill. "You don't seem to appreciate your situation. You're a prisoner, understand?"

Dalgetty braced his muscles. He didn't reply.

Bancroft sighed. "Bring him in," he said.

One of the guards went out. Dalgetty's heart stumbled. *Dad,* he thought. It was anguish in him. Casimir walked over to stand in front of him. Her eyes searched his.

"Don't be a fool," she said. "It hurts worse than you know. Tell us."

He looked up at her. *I'm afraid,* he thought. *God knows I'm afraid.* His own sweat was acrid in his nostrils. "No," he said.

"I tell you they'll do everything!" She had a nice voice, low and soft, but it roughened now. Her face was colorless with strain. "Go on, man, don't condemn yourself to—mindlessness!"

There was something strange here. Dalgetty's senses began to reach out. She was leaning close and he knew the signs of horror even if she tried to hide them. *She's not so hard as she makes out—but then why is she with them?*

He threw a bluff. "I know who you are," he said. "Shall I tell your friends?"

"No, you don't!" She stepped back, rigid, and his whetted senses caught the fear-smell. In a moment there was control and she said, "All right then, have it your way."

And underneath, the thought, slowed by the gluiness of panic, *Does he know I'm FBI?*

FBI! He jerked against the straps. Ye gods!

Calmness returned to him as she walked to her chief but his mind whirred. Yes, why not? Institute men had little connection with the Federal detectives, who, since the abolition of a discredited Security, had resumed a broad function. They might easily have become dubious about Bertrand Meade on their own, have planted operatives with him. They had women among them too and a woman was always less conspicuous than a man.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He felt a chill. The last thing he wanted was a Federal agent here.

The door opened again. A quartet of guards brought in Michael Tighe. The Briton halted, staring before him. *"Simon!"* It was a harsh sound, full of pain.

"Have they hurt you, Dad?" asked Dalgetty very gently.

"No, no—not till now." The gray head shook. "But you . . ."

"Take it easy, Dad," said Dalgetty.

The guards hustled Tighe over to a front-row bench and sat him down. Old man and young locked eyes across the bare space.

Tighe spoke to him in the hidden way. *What are you going to do? I can't sit and let them—*

Dalgetty could not reply unheard but he shook his head. "I'll be okay," he answered aloud.

Do you think you can make a break? I'll try to help you.

"No," said Dalgetty. "Whatever happens you lie low. That's an order."

He blocked off sensitivity as Bancroft snapped, "Enough. One of you is going to yield. If Dr. Tighe won't, then we'll work on him and see if Mr. Dalgetty can hold out."

He waved his hand as he took out a cigar. Two of the goons stepped up to the chair. They had rubberite hoses in their hands.

The first blow thudded against Dalgetty's ribs. He didn't feel it —he had thrown up a nerve bloc —but it rattled his teeth together. And while he was insensitive he'd be unable to listen in on . . .

Another thud, and another. Dalgetty clenched his fists. What to do, what to do? He looked over to the desk. Bancroft was smoking and watching as dispassionately as if it were some mildly interesting experiment. Casimir had turned her back.

"Something funny here, chief." One of the goons straightened. "I don't think he's feeling nothing."

"Doped?" Bancroft frowned. "No, that's hardly possible." He rubbed his chin, regarding Dalgetty with wondering eyes. Casimir wheeled around to stare. Sweat filmed Michael Tighe's face, glistening in the chill white light.

"He can still be hurt," said the guard.

Bancroft winced. "I don't like outright mutilation," he said. "But still—I've warned you, Dalgetty."

"Get out, Simon," whispered Tighe. *"Get out of here."*

Dalgetty's red head lifted. Decision crystalized within him. He would be no use to anyone with a broken leg, a crushed foot, an eye knocked out, seared lungs—and Casimir was FBI, she might be able to do something at this end in spite of all.

He tested the straps. A quarter inch of leatherite—he could snap them but would he break his bones doing it?

Only one way to find out, he thought bleakly.

"I'll get a blowtorch," said one of the guards in the rear of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

room. His face was wholly impassive. Most of these goons must be moronic, thought Dalgetty. Most of the guards in the twentieth-century extermination camps had been. No inconvenient empathy with the human flesh they broke and flayed and burned.

He gathered himself. This time it was rage, a cloud of fury rising in his mind, a ragged red haze across his vision. That they would *dare!*

He snarled as the strength surged up in him. He didn't even feel the straps as they popped across. The same movement hurtled him across the room toward the door.

Someone yelled. A guard leaped in his path, a giant of a man. Dalgetty's fist sprang before him, there was a cracking sound and the goon's head snapped back against his own spine. Dalgetty was already past him. The door was shut in his face. Wood crashed as he went through it.

A bullet wailed after him. He dodged down the corridor, up the nearest steps, the walls blurred with his own speed. Another slug smacked into the paneling beside him. He rounded a corner, saw a window and covered his eyes with an arm as he leaped.

The plastic was tough but a hundred and seventy pounds hit it at fifteen feet per second. Dalgetty went through!

Sunlight flamed in his eyes as he hit the ground. Rolling over and bouncing to his feet he set out across lawn and garden. As he ran his vision swept the landscape. In that state of fear and wrath he could not command much thought but his memory stored the data for re-examination.

V

The house was a rambling two-story affair, all curves and planes between palm trees, the island sloping swiftly from its front to a beach and dock. On one side was the airfield, on another the guard barracks. To the rear, in the direction of Dalgetty's movement, the ground became rough and wild, stones and sand and sawgrass and clumps of palmettos, climbing upward for a good two miles. On every side, he could see the infinite blue sparkle of ocean. Where could he hide?

He didn't notice the slashing blades through which he raced and the dry gulping of his lungs was something dreadfully remote. But when a bullet went past one ear, he heard that and drew more speed from some unknown depth. A glance behind revealed his pursuers boiling out of the house, men in gray with the hot sunlight blinking off their guns.

He ducked around a thicket, flopped and belly-crawled over a rise of land. On the farther side he straightened again and ran up the long slope. Another slug and another. They were almost a mile behind now but their guns had a long reach. He bent low, zigzag-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ging as he ran. The bullets kicked up spurts of sand around him.

A six-foot bluff loomed in his path, black volcanic rock shining like wet glass. He hit it at full speed. He almost *walked* up its face and in the instant when his momentum was gone caught a root and yanked himself to the top. Again he was out of their sight. He sprang around another hulk of stone and skidded to a halt. At his feet, a sheer cliff dropped nearly a hundred feet to a white smother of surf.

Dalgetty gulped air, working his lungs like a bellows. A long jump down, he thought dizzily. If he didn't crack his skull open on a reef he might well be clawed under by the sea. But there was no other place for him to go.

He made a swift estimate. He had run the upward two miles in a little over nine minutes, surely a record for such terrain. It would take the pursuit another ten or fifteen to reach him. But he couldn't double back without being seen and this time they'd be close enough to fill him with lead.

Okay, son, he told himself. *You're going to duck now, in more than one sense.*

His light waterproof clothes, tattered by the island growth, would be no hinderance down there, but he took off his sandals and stuck them in his belt pouch. Praise all gods, the physical side of his training had included water sports. He moved along the cliff edge, looking for a place to dive. The wind whined at his feet.

There—down there. No visible rocks though the surf boiled and smoked. He willed full energy back into himself, bent his knees, jack-knifed into the air.

The sea was a hammer blow against his body. He came up threshing and tumbling, gasped a mouthful of air that was half salt spray, was pulled under again. A rock scraped his ribs. He took long strokes, always upward to the blind white shimmer of light. He got to the crest of one wave and rode it in, surfing over a razorback reef.

Shallow water. Blinded by the steady rain of salt mist, deafened by the roar and crash of the sea, he groped toward shore. A narrow pebbly beach ran along the foot of the cliff. He moved along it, hunting a place to hide.

There—a sea-worn cave, some ten feet inward, with a yard or so of fairly quiet water covering its bottom. He splashed inside and lay down, exhaustion clamping a hand on him.

It was noisy. The hollow resonance of sound filled the cave like the inside of a drum but he didn't notice. He lay on the rocks and sand, his mind spiraling toward unconsciousness, and let his body make its own recovery.

Presently he regained awareness and looked about him. The cave was dim, with only a filtered greenish light to pick out black walls and slowly swirling water.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nobody could see much below the surface—good. He studied himself. Lacerated clothes, bruised flesh and a long bleeding gash in one side. That was not good. A stain of blood on the water would give him away like a shout.

Grimacing, he pressed the edges of the wound together and willed that the bleeding stop. By the time a good enough clot was formed for him to relax his concentration the guards were scrambling down to find him. He didn't have many minutes left. Now he had to do the opposite of energizing. He had to slow metabolism down, ease his heartbeat, lower his body temperature, dull his racing brain.

He began to move his hands, swaying back and forth, muttering the autohypnotic formulas. His incantations, Tighe had called them. But they were only stylized gestures leading to conditioned reflexes deep in the medulla. *Now I lay me down to sleep . . .*

Heavy, heavy—his eyelids were drooping, the wet walls receding into a great darkness, a hand cradling his head. The noise of surf dimmed, became a rustle, the skirts of the mother he had never known, come in to bid him goodnight. Coolness stole over him like veils dropping one by one inside his head. There was winter outside and his bed was snug.

When Dalgetty heard the nearing rattle of boots—just barely through the ocean and his own drowsiness—he almost forgot what he had to do. No, yes, now he knew. Take several long, deep breaths, oxygenate the bloodstream, then fill the lungs once and slide down under the surface.

He lay there in darkness hardly conscious of the voices, dimly perceived.

"A cave here—a place for him to hide."

"Nah, I don't see nothing."

Scrunch of feet on stone. "Ouch! Stubbed my damn toe. Nah, it's a closed cave. He ain't in here."

"Hm? Look at this, then. Bloodstains on this rock, right? He's *been* here, at least."

"Under water?" Rifle butts probed but could not sound the inlet.

The woman's voice. "If he is hiding down below he'll have to come up for air."

"When? We gotta search this whole damn beach. Here, I'll just give the water a burst."

Casimir, sharply—"Don't be a fool. You won't even know if you hit him. Nobody can hold his breath more than three minutes."

"Yeah, that's right, Joe. How long we been in here?"

"One minute, I guess. Give him a couple more. Cripes! D'ja see how he ran? He ain't human!"

"He's killable, though. Me, I think he's just rolling around in the surf out there. This could be fish blood. A 'cuda chased another fish in here and bit it."

Casimir: "Or if his body drifted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in, it's safely under. Got a cigarette?"

"Here y'are, Miss. But say, I never thought to ask. How come you come with us?"

Casimir: "I'm as good a shot as you are, buster, and I want to be sure this job's done right."

Pause.

Casimir: "Almost five minutes. If he can come up now he's a seal. Especially with his body oxygen-starved after all that running."

In the slowness of Dalgetty's brain there was a chill wonder about the woman. He had read her thought, she was FBI, but she seemed strangely eager to hunt him down.

"Okay, le's get outta here."

Casimir: "You go on. I'll wait here just in case and come up to the house pretty soon. I'm tired of following you around."

"Okay. Le's go, Joe."

It was another four minutes or so before the pain and tension in his lungs became unendurable. Dalgetty knew he would be helpless as he rose, still in his semi-hibernating state, but his body was shrieking for air. Slowly he broke the surface.

The woman gasped. Then the automatic jumped into her hand and leveled between his eyes. "All right, friend. Come on out." Her voice was very low and shook a trifle but there was grimness in it.

Dalgetty climbed onto the ledge beside her and sat with his legs dangling, hunched in the misery of returning strength. When full wakefulness was achieved he looked at her and found she had moved to the farther end of the cave.

"Don't try to jump," she said. Her eyes caught the vague light in a wide glimmer, half frightened. "I don't know what to make of you."

Dalgetty drew a long breath and sat upright, bracing himself on the cold slippery stone. "I know who you are," he said.

"Who, then?" she challenged.

"You're an FBI agent planted on Bancroft."

Her gaze narrowed, her lips compressed. "What makes you think so?"

"Never mind—you are. That gives me a certain hold on you, whatever your purposes."

The blond head nodded. "I wondered about that. That remark you made to me down in the cell suggested—well, I couldn't take chances. Especially when you showed you were something extraordinary by snapping those straps and bursting the door open. I came along with the search party in hope of finding you."

He had to admire the quick mind behind the wide smooth brow. "You damn near did—for them," he accused her.

"I couldn't do anything suspicious," she answered. "But I figured you hadn't leaped off the cliff in sheer desperation. You must have had some hiding place in mind and under water seemed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the most probable. In view of what you'd already done I was pretty sure you could hold your breath abnormally long." Her smile was a little shaky. "Though I didn't think it would be *inhumanly* long."

"You've got brains," he said, "but how much heart?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, are you going to throw Dr. Tighe and me to the wolves now? Or will you help us?"

"That depends," she answered slowly. "What are you here for?"

His mouth twisted ruefully. "I'm not here on purpose at all," Dalgetty confessed. "I was just trying to get a clue to Dr. Tighe's whereabouts. They outsmarted me and brought me here. Now I *have* to rescue him." His eyes held hers. "Kidnapping is a Federal offense. It's your duty to help me."

"I may have higher duties," she countered. Leaning forward, tautly, "But how do you expect to do this?"

"I'm damned if I know." Dalgetty looked moodily out at the beach and the waves and the smoking spindrift. "But that gun of yours would be a big help."

She stood for a moment, scowling with thought. "If I don't come back soon they'll be out hunting for me."

"We've got to find another hiding place," he agreed. "Then they will assume I survived after all and grabbed you. They'll be scouring the whole island for us. If we haven't been located before dark they'll be spread thin enough to give us a chance."

"It makes more sense for me to go back now," she said. "Then I can be on the inside to help you."

He shook his head. "Uh-uh. Quit making like a stereoshow detective. If you leave me your gun, claiming you lost it, that's sure to bring suspicion on you the way they're excited right now. If you don't I'll still be on the outside and unarmed—and what could you do, one woman alone in that nest? Now we're two with a shooting iron between us. I think that's a better bet."

After a while, she nodded. "Okay, you win. Assuming"—the half-lowered gun was raised again with a jerking motion—"that I will aid you. Who are you? *What* are you, Dalgetty?"

He shrugged. "Let's say I'm Dr. Tighe's assistant and have some unusual powers. You know the Institute well enough to realize this isn't just a feud between two gangster groups."

"I wonder . . ." Suddenly she clanked the automatic back into its holster. "All right. For the time being only though!"

Relief was a wave rushing through him. "Thank you," he whispered. Then, "Where can we go?"

"I've been swimming around here in the quieter spots," she said. "I know a place. Wait here."

She stepped across the cave

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and peered out its mouth. Someone must have hailed her, for she waved back. She stood leaning against the rock and Dalgetty saw how the sea-spray gleamed in her hair. After a long five minutes she turned to him again.

"All right," she said. "The last one just went up the path. Let's go." They walked along the beach. It trembled underfoot with the rage of the sea. There was a grinding under the snort and roar of surf as if the world's teeth ate rock.

The beach curved inward, forming a small bay sheltered by outlying skerries. A narrow path ran upward from it but it was toward the sea that the woman gestured. "Out there," she said. "Follow me." She took off her shoes as he had done and checked her holster: the gun was waterproof, but it wouldn't do to have it fall out. She waded into the sea and struck out with a powerful crawl.

VI

They climbed up on one of the hogback rocks some ten yards from shore. This one rose a good dozen feet above the surface. It was cleft in the middle, forming a little hollow hidden from land and water alike. They crawled into this and sat down, breathing hard. The sea was loud at their backs and the air felt cold on their wet skins.

Dalgetty leaned back against the smooth stone, looking at the woman, who was unemotionally counting how many clips she had in her pouch. The thin drenched tunic and slacks showed a very nice figure. "What's your name?" he asked.

"Casimir," she answered, without looking up.

"First name, I mean. Mine is Simon."

"Elena, if you must know. Four packs, a hundred rounds plus ten in the chamber now. If we have to shoot them all, we'd better be good. These aren't magnums, so you have to hit a man just right to put him out of action."

"Well," shrugged Dalgetty, "we'll just have to lumber along as best we can. I oak we don't make ashes of ourselves."

"Oh, *no!*" He couldn't tell whether it was appreciation or dismay. "At a time like this too."

"It doesn't make me very popular," he agreed. "Everybody says to elm with me. But, as they say in France, ve are alo-o-one now, mon cherry, and tree's a crowd."

"Don't get ideas," she snapped.

"Oh, I'll get plenty of ideas, though I admit this isn't the place to carry them out." Dalgetty folded his arms behind his head and blinked up at the sky. "Man, could I use a nice tall mint julep right now."

Elena frowned. "If you're trying to convince me you're just a simple American boy you might as well quit," she said thinly. "That sort of—of emotional con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trol, in a situation like this, only makes you less human."

Dalgetty swore at himself. She was too damn quick, that was all. And her intelligence might be enough for her to learn . . .

Will I have to kill her?

He drove the thought from him. He could overcome his own conditioning about anything, including murder, if he wanted to, but he'd never want to. No, that was out. "How did you get here?" he asked. "How much does the FBI know?"

"Why should I tell you?"

"Well, it'd be nice to know if we can expect reinforcements."

"We can't." Her voice was bleak. "I might as well let you know. The Institute could find out anyway through its government connections—the damned octopus!" he looked into the sky. Dalgetty's gaze followed the curve of her high cheekbones. Unusual face—you didn't often see such an oddly pleasing arrangement. The slight departure from symmetry . . .

"We've wondered about Bertrand Meade for some time, as every thinking person has," she began tonelessly. "It's too bad there are so few thinking people in the country."

"Something the Institute is trying to correct," Dalgetty put in.

Elena ignored him. "It was finally decided to work agents into his various organizations. I've been with Thomas Bancroft for about two years now. My background was carefully faked and I'm a useful assistant. But even so it was only a short while back that I got sufficiently into his confidence to be given some inkling of what's going on. As far as I know no other FBI operative has learned as much."

"And what have you found out?"

"Essentially the same things you were describing in the cell, plus more details on the actual work they're doing. Apparently the Institute was onto Meade's plans long before we were. It doesn't speak well for your purposes, whatever they are, that you haven't asked us for help before this.

"The decision to kidnap Dr. Tighe was taken only a couple of weeks ago. I haven't had a chance to communicate with my associates in the force. There's always someone around, watching. The set-up's well arranged, so that even those not under suspicion don't have much chance to work unobserved, once they've gotten high enough to know anything important. Everybody spies on everybody else and submits periodic reports."

She gave him a harsh look. "So here I am. No official person knows my whereabouts and if I should disappear it would be called a deplorable accident. Nothing could be proved and I doubt if the FBI would ever get another chance to do any effective spying."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"But you have proof enough for a raid," he ventured.

"No, we haven't. Up till the time I was told Dr. Tighe was going to be snatched I didn't know for certain that anything illegal was going on. There's nothing in the law against like-minded people knowing each other and having a sort of club. Even if they hire tough characters and arm them the law can't protest. The Act of Nineteen Ninety-nine effectively forbids private armies but it would be hard to prove Meadé has one."

"He doesn't really," said Dalgetty. "Those goons aren't much more than what they claim to be —bodyguards. This whole fight is primarily on a—a mental level."

"So I gather. And can a free country forbid debate or propaganda? Not to mention that Meade's people include some powerful men in the government itself. If I could get away from here alive we'd be able to hang a kidnapping charge on Thomas Bancroft, with assorted charges of threat, mayhem and conspiracy, but it wouldn't touch the main group." Her fists clenched. "It's like fighting shadows."

"You war against the sunset-glow. The judgment follows fast my lord!" quoted Dalgetty. *Heriots' Ford* was one of the few poems he liked. "Getting Bancroft out of the way would be something," he added. "The way to fight Meade is not to attack him physically but to change the conditions under which he must work."

"Change them to what?" Her eyes challenged his. He noticed that there were small gold flecks in the gray. "What does the Institute want?"

"A sane world," he replied.

"I've wondered," she said. "Maybe Bancroft is more nearly right than you. Maybe I should be on his side after all."

"I take it you favor libertarian government," he said. "In the past it's always broken down sooner or later and the main reason has been that there aren't enough people with the intelligence, alertness and toughness to resist the inevitable encroachments of power on liberty.

"The Institute is trying to do two things—create such a citizenry and simultaneously to build up a society which itself produces men of that kind and reinforces those traits in them. It can be done, given time. Under ideal conditions we estimate it would take about three hundred years for the whole world. Actually it'll take longer."

"But just what kind of person is needed?" Elena asked coldly. "Who decides it? *You* do. You're just the same as all other reformers, including Meade—hell bent to change the whole human race over to your particular ideal, whether they like it or not."

"Oh, they'll like it," he smiled. "That's part of the process."

"It's a worse tyranny than

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whips and barbed wire," she snapped.

"You've never experienced those then."

"You *have* got that knowledge," she accused. "You have the data and the equations to be—sociological engineers."

"In theory," he said. "In practice it isn't that easy. The social forces are so great that—well, we could be overwhelmed before accomplishing anything. And there are plenty of things we still don't know. It will take decades, perhaps centuries, to work out a complete dynamics of man. We're one step beyond the politician's rule of thumb but not up to the point where we can use slide rules. We have to feel our way."

"Nevertheless," she said, "you've got the beginnings of a knowledge which reveals the true structure of society and the processes that make it. Given that knowledge man could in time build his own world-order the way he desired it, a stable culture that wouldn't know the horrors of oppression or collapse. But you've hidden away the very fact that such information exists. You're using it in secret."

"Because we have to," Dalgetty said. "If it were generally known that we're putting pressure on here and there and giving advice slanted just the way *we* desire, the whole thing would blow up in our faces. People don't like being shoved around."

"And still you're doing it!" One hand dropped to her gun. "You, a clique of maybe a hundred men . . ."

"More than that. You'd be surprised how many are with us."

"You've decided *you* are the almighty arbiters. Your superior wisdom is going to lead poor blind mankind up the road to heaven. I say it's down the road to hell! The last century saw the dictatorship of the elite and the dictatorship of the proletariat. This one seems to be birthing the dictatorship of the intellectuals. I don't like any of them!"

"Look, Elena." Dalgetty leaned on one elbow and faced her. "It isn't that simple. All right, we've got some special knowledge. When we first realized we were getting somewhere in our research we had to decide whether to make our results public or merely give out selected less important findings. Don't you see, no matter what we did it would have been us, the few men, who decided? Even destroying all our information would have been a decision."

His voice grew more urgent. "So we made what I think was the right choice. History shows as conclusively as our own equations that freedom is not a 'natural' condition of man. It's a metastable state at best, all too likely to collapse into tyranny. The tyranny can be imposed from outside by the better-organized armies of a conqueror, or it can come from within—through the will of the people themselves,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

surrendering their rights to the father-image, the almighty leader, the absolute state.

"What use does Bertrand Meade want to make of our findings if he can get them? To bring about the end of freedom by working on the people till they themselves desire it. And the damnable part of it is that Meade's goal is much more easily attained than ours.

"So suppose we made our knowledge public. Suppose we educated anyone who desired it in our techniques. Can't you see what would happen? Can't you see the struggle that would be waged for control of the human mind? It could start as innocuously as a businessman planning a more effective advertising campaign. It would end in a welter of propaganda, counter-propaganda, social and economic manipulations, corruption, competition for the key offices—and so, ultimately, there would be violence.

"All the psychodynamic tensors ever written down won't stop a machine-gun. Violence riding over a society thrown into chaos, enforced peace—and the peacemakers, perhaps with the best will in the world, using the Institute techniques to restore order. Then one step leads to another, power gets more and more centralized and it isn't long before you have the total state back again. Only this total state could *never* be overthrown!"

Elena Casimir bit her lip. A stray breeze slid down the rock wall and rumpled her bright hair. After a long while she said, "Maybe you're right. But America today has, on the whole, a good government. You could let them know."

"Too risky. Sooner or later someone, probably with very idealistic motives, would force the whole thing into the open. So we're keeping hidden the very fact that our most important equations exist—which is why we didn't ask for help when Meade's detectives finally learned that they know."

"How do you know your precious Institute won't become just such an oligarchy as you describe?"

"I don't," Simon said, "but it's improbable. You see, the recruits who are eventually taught everything we know are pretty thoroughly indoctrinated with our own present-day beliefs. And we've learned enough individual psych to do some real indoctrinating! They'll pass it on to the next generation and so on.

"Meanwhile we hope the social structure and the mental climate is being modified in such a way that eventually it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to impose absolute control by any means. For as I said before, even an ultimately developed psychodynamics can't do everything. Ordinary propaganda, for instance, is quite ineffective on people trained in critical thinking.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"When enough people the world over are sane we can make the knowledge general. Meanwhile we've got to keep it under wraps and quietly prevent anyone else from learning the same things independently. Most such prevention, by the way, consists merely of recruiting promising researchers into our own ranks."

"The world's too big," she said very softly. "You can't foresee all that'll happen. Too many things could go wrong."

"Maybe. It's a chance we've got to take." His own gaze was somber.

They sat for awhile in stillness. Then she said, "It all sounds very pretty. But—what are you, Dalgetty?"

"Simon," he corrected.

"What are you?" she repeated. "You've done things I wouldn't have believed were possible. *Are you human?*"

"I'm told so." He smiled.

"Yes? I wonder! How is it possible that you—"

He wagged a finger. "Ah-ah! Right of privacy." And with swift seriousness, "You know too much already. I have to assume you can keep it secret all your life."

"That remains to be seen," Elena said, not looking at him.

VII

Sundown burned across the waters and the island rose like a mountain of night against the darkening sky. Dalgetty stretched cramped muscles and peered over the bay.

In the hours of waiting there had not been much said between him and the woman. He had dropped a few questions, with the careful casualness of the skilled analyst, and gotten the expected reactions. He knew a little more about her—a child of the strangling dying cities and shadowy family life of the 1980's, forced to armor herself in harshness, finding in the long training for her work and now in the job itself an ideal to substitute for the tenderness she had never known.

He felt pity for her but there was little he could do to help just now. To her own queries he gave guarded replies. It occurred to him briefly that he was, in his way, as lonesome as she. *But of course I don't mind—or do I?*

Mostly they tried to plan their next move. For the time, at least, they were of one purpose. She described the layout of house and grounds and indicated the cell where Michael Tighe was ordinarily kept. But there was not much they could do to think out tactics. "If Bancroft gets alarmed enough," she said, "he'll have Dr. Tighe flown elsewhere."

He agreed. "That's why we'd better hit tonight, before he can get that worried." The thought was pain within him. *Dad, what are they doing to you now?*

"There's also the matter of food and drink." Her voice was husky with thirst and dull with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the discouragement of hunger. "We can't stay out here like this much longer." She gave him a strange glance. "Don't you feel weak?"

"Not now," he said. He had blocked off the sensations.

"They—*Simon!*" She grabbed his arm. "A boat—hear?"

The murmur of jets drifted to him through the beating waves. "Yeah. Quick—underneath!"

They scrambled over the hogback and slid down its farther side. The sea clawed at Dalgetty's feet and foam exploded over his head. He hunched low, throwing one arm about her as she slipped. The airboat murmured overhead, hot gold in the sunset light. Dalgetty crouched, letting the breakers run coldly around him. The ledge where they clung was worn smooth, offered little to hold onto.

The boat circled, its jets thunderous at low speed. *They're worried about her now. They must be sure I'm still alive.*

White water roared above his head. He breathed a hasty gasp of air before the next comber hit him. Their bodies were wholly submerged, their faces shouldn't show in that haze of foam—but the jet was soaring down and there would be machine-guns on it.

Dalgetty's belly muscles stiffened, waiting for the tracers to burn through him.

Elena's body slipped from his grasp and went under. He hung there, not daring to follow. A stolen glance upward—yes, the jet was out of sight again, moving back toward the field. He dove off the ledge and struck into the waves. The girl's head rose over them as he neared. She twisted from him and made her own way back to the rock. But when they were in the hollow again her teeth rattled with chill and she pressed against him for warmth.

"Okay," he said shakily. "Okay, we're all right now. You are hereby entitled to join our Pacific wet-erans' club."

Her laugh was small under the boom of breakers and hiss of scud. "You're trying hard, aren't you?"

"I—*oh,* oh! Get *down!*"

Peering over the edge Dalgetty saw the men descending the path. There were half a dozen, armed and wary. One had a WT radio unit on his back. In the shadow of the cliff they were almost invisible as they began prowling the beach.

"Still hunting us!" Her voice was a groan.

"You didn't expect otherwise, did you? I'm just hoping they don't come out here. Does anybody else know of this spot?" He held his lips close to her ear.

"No, I don't believe so," she breathed. "I was the only one who cared to go swimming at this end of the island. But . . ."

Dalgetty waited, grimly. The sun was down at last, the twilight thickening. A few stars twinkled

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to life in the east. The goons finished their search and settled in a line along the beach.

"Oh-oh," muttered Dalgetty. "I get the idea. Bancroft's had the land beaten for me so thoroughly he's sure I must be somewhere out to sea. If I were he I'd guess I'd swum far out to be picked up by a waterboat. So—he's guarding every possible approach against a landing party."

"What can we do?" whispered Elena. "Even if we can swim around their radius of sight we can't land just anywhere. Most of the island is vertical cliff. Or can you . . . ?"

"No," he said. "Regardless of what you may think I don't have vacuum cups on my feet. But how far does that gun of yours carry?"

She stole a glance over the edge. Night was sweeping in. The island was a wall of blackness and the men at its foot were hidden. "You can't *see!*" she protested.

He squeezed her shoulder. "Oh yes I can, honey. But whether I'm a good enough shot to . . . We'll have to try it, that's all."

Her face was a white blur and fear of the unknown put metal in her voice. "Part seal, part cat, part deer, part what else? I don't think you're human, Simon Dalgetty."

He didn't answer. The abnormal voluntary dilation of pupils hurt his eyes.

"What else has Dr. Tighe done?" Her tone was chill in the dark. "You can't study the human mind without studying the body too. What's he done? Are you the mutant they're always speculating about? Did Dr. Tighe create or find homo superior?"

"If I don't plug that radio com-set before they can use it," he said, "I'll be homo-genized."

"You can't laugh it off," she said through taut lips. "If you aren't of our species I have to assume you're our enemy—till you prove otherwise!" Her fingers closed hard on his arm. "Is that what your little gang at the Institute is doing? Have they decided that mere humanity isn't good enough to be civilized? Are they preparing the way for your kind to take over?"

"Listen," he said wearily. "Right now we're two people, very mortal indeed, being hunted. So shut up!"

He took the pistol from her holster and slipped a full clip into its magazine. His vision was at high sensitivity now, her face showed white against the wet rock with gray highlights along its strong cheekbones beneath the wide frightened eyes. Beyond the reefs the sea was gunmetal under the stars, streaked with foam and shadow.

Ahead of him, as he rose to his feet, the line of guards stood out as paler darknesses against the virtiginous island face. They had mounted a heavy machine-gun to point seaward and a self-powered

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

spotlight, not turned on, rested nearby. Those two things could be dangerous but first he had to find the radio set that could call the whole garrison down on them.

There! It was a small hump on the back of one man, near the middle of the beach. He was pacing restlessly up and down with a tommy-gun in his hands. Dalgetty raised the pistol with slow hard-held concentration, wishing it were a rifle. *Remember your target practice now, arm loose, fingers extended, don't pull the trigger but squeeze—because you've got to be right the first time!*

He shot. The weapon was a military model, semi-noiseless and with no betraying streak of light. The first bullet spun the goon on his heels and sent him lurching across sand and rock. Dalgetty worked the trigger, spraying around his victim, a storm of lead that *must* ruin the sender.

Chaos on the beach! If that spotlight went on with his eyes at their present sensitivity, he'd be blind for hours. He fired carefully, smashing lens and bulb. The machine-gun opened up, stuttering wildly into the dark. If someone elsewhere on the island heard that noise—Dalgetty shot again, dropping the gunner over his weapon.

Bullets spanged around him, probing the darkness. One down, two down, three down. A fourth was running along the upward path. Dalgetty fired and missed, fired and missed, fired and missed. He was getting out of range, carrying the alarm—*there!* He fell slowly, like a jointed doll, rolling down the trail. The two others were dashing for the shelter of a cave, offering no chance to nail them.

Dalgetty scrambled over the rock, splashed into the bay and struck out for the shore. Shots raked the water. He wondered if they could hear his approach through the sea-noise. Soon he'd be close enough for normal night vision. He gave himself wholly to swimming.

His feet touched sand and he waded ashore, the water dragging at him. Crouching, he answered the shots coming from the cave. The shriek and yowl were everywhere around him now. It seemed impossible that they should not hear up above. He tensed his jaws and crawled toward the machine-gun. A cold part of him noticed that the fire was in a random pattern. They couldn't see him then.

The man lying by the gun was still alive but unconscious. That was enough. Dalgetty crouched over the trigger. He had never handled a weapon like this but it must be ready for action—only minutes ago it had tried to kill him. He sighted on the cave mouth and cut loose.

Recoil made the gun dance till he caught onto the trick of using it. He couldn't see anyone in the cave but he could bounce lead off

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

its walls. He shot for a full minute before stopping. Then he crawled away at an angle till he reached the cliff. Sliding along this he approached the entrance and waited. No sound came from inside.

He risked a quick glance. Yes, it had done the job. He felt a little sick.

Elena was climbing out of the water when he returned. There was a strangeness in the look she gave him. "All taken care of?" she asked tonelessly.

He nodded, remembered she could hardly see the movement, said aloud, "Yes, I think so. Grab some of this hardware and let's get moving."

With his nerves already keyed for night vision it was not difficult to heighten other perceptions and catch her thinking . . . *not human. Why should he mind if he kills human beings when he isn't one himself?*

"But I do mind," he said gently. "I've never killed a man before and I don't like it."

She jerked away from him. It had been a mistake, he realized. "Come on," he said. "Here's your pistol. Better take a tommy-gun too if you can handle it."

"Yes," she said. He had lowered his reception again, her voice fell quiet and hard. "Yes, I can use one."

On whom? he wondered. He picked up an automatic rifle from one of the sprawled figures. "Let's go," he said. Turning, he led the way up the path. His spine prickled with the thought of her at his back, keyed to a pitch of near-hysteria.

"We're out to rescue Michael Tighe, remember," he whispered over his shoulder. "I've had no military experience and I doubt that you've ever done anything like this either, so we'll probably make every mistake in the books. But we've got to get Dr. Tighe."

She didn't answer.

At the top of the path Dalgetty went down on his stomach again and slithered up over the crest. Slowly he raised his head to peer in front of him. Nothing moved, nothing stirred. He stooped low as he walked forward.

The thickets fenced off vision a few yards ahead. Beyond them, at the end of the slope, he could glimpse lights. Bancroft's place must be one glare of radiance. How to get in there without being seen? He drew Elena close to him. For a moment she stiffened at his touch, then she yielded. "Any ideas?" he asked.

"No," she replied.

"I could play dead," he began tentatively. "You could claim to have been caught by me, to have gotten your gun back and killed me. They might lose suspicion then and carry me inside."

"You think you could fake *that?*" She pulled away from him again.

"Sure. Make a small cut and force it to bleed enough to look like a bullet wound—which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

doesn't usually bleed much, anyway. Slow down heartbeat and respiration till their ordinary senses couldn't detect them. Near-total muscular relaxation, including even those unromantic aspects of death which are so rarely mentioned. Oh yes."

"Now I know you aren't human," she said. There was a shudder in her voice. "Are you a synthetic thing? Did they make you in the laboratory, Dalgetty?"

"I just want your opinion of the idea," he muttered with a flicker of anger.

It must have taken an effort for Elena to wrench clear of her fear of him. But then she shook her head. "Too risky. If I were one of those fellows, with all you've already done to make me wonder about you, the first thing I'd do on finding your supposed corpse would be to put a bullet through its brain—and maybe a stake through its heart. Or can you survive that too?"

"No," he admitted. "All right, it was just a thought. Let's work a bit closer to the house."

They went through brush and grass. It seemed to him that an army would make less noise. Once his straining ears caught a sound of boots and he yanked Elena into the gloom under a palmetto. Two guards tramped by, circling the land on patrol. Their forms loomed huge and black against the stars.

Near the edge of the grounds Dalgetty and Elena crouched in the long stiff grass and looked at the place they must enter. The man had had to lower his visual sensitivity as they approached the light. There were floodlights harsh on dock, airfield, barracks and lawn, with parties of guards moving around each section. Light showed in only one window of the house, on the second story. Bancroft must be there, pacing and peering out into the night where his enemy stirred. Had he called by radio for reinforcements?

At least no airboat had arrived or left. Dalgetty knew he would have seen one in the sky. Dr. Tighe was here yet—if he lived.

Decision grew in the man. There was a wild chance. "Are you much of an actress, Elena?" he whispered.

"After two years as a spy I'd better be." Her face bore a hint of puzzlement under the tension as she looked at him. He could guess her thought—*For a superman, he asks some simple-minded questions. But then what is he? Or is he only dissembling?*

He explained his idea. She scowled. "I know it's crazy," he told her, "but have you anything better to offer?"

"No. If you can handle your part . . ."

"And you yours." He gave her a bleak look, but there was an appeal in it. Suddenly his half-glimpsed face looked strangely young and helpless. "I'll be putting my life in your hands. If you don't trust me you can shoot.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But you'll be killing a lot more than me."

"Tell me what you are," she said. "How can I know what the ends of the Institute are when they're using such means as you? Mutant or android or"— she caught her breath— "or actually a creature from outer space, the stars. Simon Dalgetty, what are you?"

"If I answered that," he said with desolation in his voice, "I'd probably be lying anyway. You've got to trust me this far."

She sighed. "All right." He didn't know if she was lying too.

He laid the rifle down and folded his hands on top of his head. She walked behind him, down the slope toward the light, her submachine-gun at his back.

As he walked he was building up a strength and speed no human ought to possess.

One of the sentries pacing through the garden came to a halt. His rifle swung up, and the voice was a hysterical yammer: "Who goes?"

"It's me, Buck," cried Elena. "Don't get trigger-happy. I'm bringing in the prisoner."

"Huh?"

Dalgetty shuffled into the light and stood slumped, letting his jaw hang slack as if he were near falling with weariness.

"You *got* him!" The goon sprang forward.

"Don't holler," said Elena. "I got this one, all right, but there are others. You keep on your beat. I got his weapons from him. He's harmless now. Is Mr. Bancroft in the house?"

"Yeah, yeah—sure." The heavy face peered at Dalgetty with more than a tinge of fear. "But lemme go along. Yuh know what he done last time."

"Stay on your post!" she snapped. "You've got your orders. I can handle him."

VIII

It might not have worked on most men but these goons were not very bright. The guard nodded, gulped and resumed his pacing. Dalgetty walked on up the path toward the house.

A man at the door lifted his rifle. "Halt, there! I'll have to call Mr. Bancroft first." The sentry went inside and thumbed an intercom switch.

Dalgetty, poised in a nervous tautness that could explode into physical strength, felt a clutch of fear. The whole thing was so fiendishly uncertain—anything could happen.

Bancroft's voice drifted out. "That you, Elena? Good work, girl! How'd you do it?" The warmth in his tone, under the excitement, made Dalgetty wonder briefly just what the relationship between those two had been.

"I'll tell you upstairs, Tom," she answered. "This is too big for anyone else to hear. But keep the patrols going. There are more like this creature around the island."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dalgetty could imagine the primitive shudder in Thomas Bancroft, instinct from ages when the night was prowling terror about a tiny circle of fire. "All right. If you're sure he won't—"

"I've got him well covered."

"I'll send over half a dozen guards just the same. Hold it."

The men came running from barracks, where they must have been waiting for a call to arms, and closed in. It was a ring of tight faces and wary eyes and pointing guns. They feared him and the fear made them deadly. Elena's countenance was wholly blank.

"Let's go," she said.

A man walked some feet ahead of the prisoner, casting glances behind him all the time. There was one on either side, the rest were at the rear. Elena walked among them, her weapon never wavering from his back. They went down the long handsome corridor and stood on the purring escalator. Dalgetty's eyes roved with a yearning in them—how much longer, he wondered, would he be able to see anything at all?

The door to Bancroft's study was ajar and Tighe's voice drifted out. It was a quiet drawl, unshaken despite the blow it must have been to hear of Dalgetty's recapture. Apparently he was continuing a conversation begun earlier:

". . . science goes back a long way, actually. Francis Bacon speculated about a genuine science of man. Poole did some work along those lines as well as inventing the symbolic logic which was to be such a major tool in solving the problem.

"In the last century a number of lines of attack were developed. There was already the psychology of Freud and his successors, of course, which gave the first real notion of human semantics. There were the biological, chemical and physical approaches to man as a mechanism. Comparative historians like Spengler, Pareto and Toynbee realized that history did not merely happen but had some kind of pattern.

"Cybernetics developed such concepts as homeostasis and feedback, concepts which were applicable to individual man and to society as a whole. Games theory, the principle of least effort and Haeml's generalized epistemology pointed toward basic laws and the analytical approach.

"The new symbologies in logic and mathematics suggested formulations—for the problem was no longer one of gathering data so much as of finding a rigorous symbolism to handle them and indicate new data. A great deal of the Institute's work has lain simply in collecting and synthesizing all these earlier findings."

Dalgetty felt a rush of admiration. Trapped and helpless among enemies made ruthless by ambition and fear, Michael Tighe could still play with them. He must have been stalling for hours,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

staving off drugs and torture by revealing first one thing and then another—but subtly, so that his captors probably didn't realize he was only telling them what they could find in any library.

The party entered a large room, furnished with wealth and taste, lined with bookshelves. Dalgetty noticed an intricate Chinese chess set on the desk. So Bancroft or Meade played chess—that was something they had in common, at least, on this night of murder.

Tighe looked up from the armchair. A couple of guards stood behind him, their arms folded, but he ignored them. "Hello, son," he murmured. There was pain in his eyes. "Are you all right?"

Dalgetty nodded mutely. There was no way to signal the Englishman, no way to let him hope.

Bancroft stepped over to the door and locked it. He gestured at the guards, who spread themselves around the walls, their guns aimed inward. He was shaking ever so faintly and his eyes glittered as with fever. "Sit down," he said. *"There!"*

Dalgetty took the indicated armchair. It was deep and soft. It would be hard to spring out of quickly. Elena took a seat opposite him, poised on its edge, the tommy-gun in her lap. It was suddenly very still in the room.

Bancroft went over to the desk and fumbled with a humidor. He didn't look up. "So you caught him," he said.

"Yes," replied Elena. "After he caught me first."

"How did you—turn the tables?" Bancroft took out a cigar and bit the end off savagely. "What happened?"

"I was in a cave, resting," she said tonelessly. "He rose out of the water and grabbed me. He'd been hiding underneath longer than anybody would have thought possible. He forced me out to a rock in the bay there— you know it? We hid till sundown, when he opened up on your men on that beach. He killed them all.

"I'd been tied but I'd managed to rub the strips loose. It was just a piece off his shirt he tied me with. While he was shooting I grabbed a stone and clipped him behind the ear. I dragged him to shore while he was still out, took one of the guns lying there and marched him here."

"Good work." Bancroft inhaled raggedly. "I'll see that you get a proper bonus for this, Elena. But what else? You said . . ."

"Yes." Her gaze was steady on him. "We talked, out there in the bay. He wanted to convince me I should help him. Tom—he isn't human."

"Eh?" Bancroft's heavy form jerked. With an effort he steadied himself. "What do you mean?"

"That muscular strength and speed, and telepathy. He can see in the dark and hold his breath longer than any man. No, he isn't human."

Bancroft looked at Dalgetty's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

motionless form. The prisoner's eyes clashed with his and it was he who looked away again. "A telepath, did you say?"

"Yes," she answered. "Do you want to prove it, Dalgetty?"

There was stillness in the room. After a moment Dalgetty spoke. "You were thinking, Bancroft, 'All right, damn you, can you read my mind? Go ahead and try it and you'll know what I'm thinking about you.' The rest was obscenities."

"A guess," said Bancroft. There was sweat on his cheeks. "Just a good guess. Try again."

Another pause, then, "'Ten, nine, seven, A, B, M, Z, Z . . .' Shall I keep on?" Dalgetty asked quietly.

"No," muttered Bancroft. "No, that's enough. What are you?"

"He told me," put in Elena. "You're going to have trouble believing it. I'm not sure if I believe it myself. But he's from another star."

Bancroft opened his lips and shut them again. The massive head shook in denial.

"He is—from Tau Ceti," said Elena. "They're way beyond us. It's the thing people have been speculating about for the last hundred years."

"Longer, my girl," said Tighe. There was no emotion in his face or voice save a dry humor, but Dalgetty knew what a flame must suddenly be leaping up inside him. "Read Voltaire's *Micromegas*."

"I've read such fiction," said Bancroft harshly. "Who hasn't? All right, why are they here, what do they want?"

"You could say," spoke Dalgetty, "that we favor the Institute."

"But you've been raised from childhood . . ."

"Oh yes. My people have been on Earth a long time. Many of them are born here. Our first spaceship arrived in Nineteen Sixty-five." He leaned forward in the chair. "I expected Casimir to be reasonable and help me rescue Dr. Tighe. Since she hasn't done so I must appeal to your own common sense. We have crews on Earth. We know where all our people are at any given time. If necessary I can die to preserve the secret of our presence but in that case you will die too, Bancroft. The island will be bombed."

"I . . ." The chief looked out the window into the enormity of night. "You can't expect me to—to accept this as if . . ."

"I've some things to tell you which may change your mind," said Dalgetty. "They will certainly prove my story. Send your men out though. This is only for your ears."

"And have you jump me!" snapped Bancroft.

"Casimir can stay," said Dalgetty, "and anyone else you are absolutely certain can keep a secret and control his own greed."

Bancroft paced once around the room. His eyes flickered back and forth over the watching men. Frightened faces, bewildered faces,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ambitious faces—it was a hard decision and Dalgetty knew grimly that his life rested on his and Elena's estimate of Thomas Bancroft's character.

"All right! Humphrey, Zimmermann, O'Brien, stay in here. If that bird moves shoot him. The rest of you wait just outside." They filed out. The door closed behind them. The three guards left posted themselves with smooth efficiency, one at the window and one at either adjoining wall. There was a long quiet.

Elena had to improvise the scheme and think it at Dalgetty. He nodded. Bancroft planted himself before the chair, legs spread wide as if braced for a blow, fists on hips.

"All right," he said. "What do you want to tell me?"

"You've caught me," said Dalgetty, "so I'm prepared to bargain for my life and Dr. Tighe's freedom. Let me show you—" He made a move as if to rise.

"Stay where you are!" snapped Bancroft, and three guns swiveled around to point at the prisoner. Elena backed away until she stood beside the one near the desk.

"As you will." Dalgetty leaned back again, casually shoving his chair a couple of feet. He was now facing the window and, as far as he could tell, sitting exactly on a line between the man there and the man at the farther wall. "The Union of Tau Ceti is interested in seeing that the right kind of civilizations develop on other planets. You could be of value to us, Thomas Bancroft, if you can be persuaded to our side, and the rewards are considerable." His glance went for a moment to the girl and she nodded imperceptibly. "For example . . ."

The power rushed up in him. Elena clubbed her gun butt and struck the man next to her behind the ear. In the fractional second before the others could understand and react Dalgetty was moving.

The impetus which launched him from the chair sent that heavy padded piece of furniture sliding across the floor to hit the man behind him with a muffled thud. His left fist took Bancroft on the jaw as he went by. The guard at the window had no time to swing his gun back from Elena and squeeze trigger before Dalgetty's hand was on his throat. His neck snapped.

Elena stood over her victim even as he toppled and aimed at the man across the room. The armchair had knocked his rifle aside. "Drop that or I shoot," she said.

Dalgetty snatched up a gun for himself, leveling it at the door. He more than half expected those outside to come rushing in, expected hell would explode. But the thick oak panels must have choked off sound.

Slowly, the man behind the chair let his rifle fall to the floor. His mouth was stretched wide with supernatural fear.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"My God!" Dr. Tighe's long form was erect, shaking, his calm broken into horror. "Simon, the risk . . ."

"We didn't have anything to lose, did we?" Dalgetty's voice was thick but the abnormal energy was receding from him. He felt a surge of weariness and knew that soon the payment must be made for the way he had abused his body. He looked down at the corpse before him. "I didn't mean to do that," he whispered.

Tighe collected himself with an effort of disciplined will and stepped over to Bancroft. "He's alive, at least," he said. "Oh my God, Simon! You could have been killed so easily."

"I may yet. We aren't out of the woods by any means. Find something to tie these two others up with, will you, Dad?"

The Englishman nodded. Elena's slugged guard was stirring and groaning. Tighe bound and gagged him with strips torn from his tunic. Under the submachine-gun the other submitted meekly enough. Dalgetty rolled them behind a sofa with the one he had slain.

Bancroft was wakening too. Dalgetty located a flask of bourbon and gave it to him. Clearing eyes looked up with the same terror. "Now what?" mumbled Bancroft. "You can't get away—"

"We can damn well try. If it had come to fighting with the rest of your gang we'd have used you as a hostage but now there's a neater way. On your feet! Here, straighten your tunic, comb your hair. Okay, you'll do just as you're told, because if anything goes wrong we'll have nothing at all to lose by shooting you." Dalgetty rapped out his orders.

Bancroft looked at Elena and there was more than physical hurt in his eyes. "Why did you do it?"

"FBI," she said.

He shook his head, still stunned, and shuffled over to the desk visiphone and called the hangar. "I've got to get to the mainland in a hurry. Have the speedster ready in ten minutes. No, just the regular pilot, nobody else. I'll have Dalgetty with me but it's okay. He's on our side now."

They went out the door. Elena cradled her tommy-gun under one arm. "You can go back to the barracks, boys," said Bancroft wearily to the men outside. "It's all been settled."

A quarter hour later Bancroft's private jet was in the air. Five minutes after that he and the pilot were bound and locked in a rear compartment. Michael Tighe took the controls. "This boat has legs," he said. "Nothing can catch us between here and California."

"All right." Dalgetty's tones were flat with exhaustion. "I'm going back to rest, Dad." Briefly his hand rested on the older man's shoulder. "It's good to have you back," he said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Thank you, son," said Michael Tighe. "I can't tell you how wonderful it is to be free again."

IX

Dalgetty found a reclining seat and eased himself into it. One by one he began releasing the controls over himself—sensitivities, nerve blocs, glandular stimulation. Fatigue and pain mounted within him. He looked out at the stars and listened to the dark whistle of air with merely human senses.

Elena Casimir came to sit beside him and he realized that his job wasn't done. He studied the strong lines of her face. She could be a hard foe but just as stubborn a friend.

"What do you have in mind for Bancroft?" he asked.

"Kidnapping charges for him and that whole gang," she said. "He won't wriggle out of it, I can guarantee you." Her eyes rested on him, unsure, a little frightened. "Federal prison psychiatrists have Institute training," she murmured. "You'll see that his personality is reshaped *your* way, won't you?"

"As far as possible," Simon said. "Though it doesn't matter much. Bancroft is finished as a factor to be reckoned with. There's still Bertrand Meade himself, of course. Even if Bancroft made a full confession I doubt that we could touch him. But the Institute has now learned to take precautions against extra-legal methods—and within the framework of the law we can give him cards and spades and still defeat him."

"With some help from my department," Elena said. There was a touch of steel in her voice. "But the whole story of this rescue will have to be played down. It wouldn't do to have too many ideas floating around in the public mind, would it?"

"That's right," he admitted. His head felt heavy, he wanted to rest it on her shoulder and sleep for a century. "It's up to you really. If you submit the right kind of report to your superiors it can all be worked out. Everything else will just be detail. But otherwise you'll ruin everything."

"I don't know." She looked at him for a long while. "I don't know if I should or not. You may be correct about the Institute and the justice of its aims and methods. But how can I be sure, when I don't know what's behind it? How do I know there wasn't more truth than fiction in that Tau Ceti story, that you aren't really the agent of some non-human power quietly taking over all our race?"

At another time Dalgetty might have argued, tried to veil it from her, tried to trick her once again. But now he was too weary. There was a great surrender in him. "I'll tell you if you wish," he said, "and after that it's in your hands. You can make us or break us."

"Go on then." Her tone withdrew into wariness.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm human," he said. "I'm as human as you are. Only I've had rather special training, that's all. It's another discovery of the Institute for which we don't feel the world is ready. It'd be too big a temptation for too many people, to create followers like me." He looked away, into the windy dark. "The scientist is also a member of society and has a responsibility toward it. This—restraint—of ours is one way in which we meet that obligation."

She didn't speak, but suddenly one hand reached over and rested on his. The impulsive gesture brought warmth flooding through him.

"Dad's work was mostly in mass-action psych," he said, making his tone try to cover what he felt, "but he has plenty of associates trying to understand the individual human being as a functioning mechanism. A lot's been learned since Freud, both from the psychiatric and the neurological angle. Ultimately, those two are interchangeable.

"Some thirty years ago one of the teams which founded the Institute learned enough about the relationship between the conscious, subconscious and involuntary minds to begin practical tests. Along with a few others I was a guinea pig. And their theories worked.

"I needn't go into the details of my training. It involved physical exercises, mental practice, some hypnotism, diet and so on. It went considerably beyond the important Synthesis education which is the most advanced thing known to the general public. But its aim —only partially realized as yet— its aim was simply to produce the completely integrated human being."

Dalgetty paused. The wind flowed and muttered beyond the wall.

"There is no sharp division between conscious and subconscious or even between those and the centers controlling involuntary functions," he said. "The brain is a continuous structure. Suppose, for instance, that you become aware of a runaway car bearing down on you.

"Your heartbeat speeds up, your adrenalin output increases, your sight sharpens, your sensitivity to pain drops—it's all preparation for fight or flight. Even without obvious physical necessity the same thing can happen on a lesser scale—for example when you read an exciting story. And psychotics, especially hysterics, can produce some of the damnedest physiological symptoms you ever saw."

"I begin to understand," she whispered.

"Rage or fear brings abnormal strength and fast reaction. But the psychotic can do more than that. He can show physical symptoms like burns, stigmata or—if female—false pregnancy. Sometimes he becomes wholly insensitive in some part of his body via

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a nerve bloc. Bleeding can start or stop without apparent cause. He can go into a coma or he can stay awake for days without getting sleepy. He can—"

"Read minds?" It was a defiance.

"Not that I know of." Simon chuckled. "But human sense organs are amazingly good. It only takes three or four quanta to stimulate the visual purple—a little more actually because of absorption by the eyeball itself. There have been hysterics who could hear a watch ticking twenty feet away that the normal person could not hear at one foot. And so on.

"There are excellent reasons why the threshold of perception is relatively high in ordinary people—the stimuli of usual conditions would be blinding and deafening, unendurable, if there weren't a defense." He grimaced. "I *know!*"

"But the telepathy?" Elena persisted.

"It's been done before," he said. "Some apparent cases of mindreading in the last century were shown to be due to extremely acute hearing. Most people subvocalize their surface thoughts. With a little practice a person who can hear those vibrations can learn to interpret them. That's all." He smiled with one side of his mouth. "If you want to hide your thoughts from me just break that habit, Elena."

She looked at him with an emotion he could not quite recognize. "I see," she breathed. "And your memory must be perfect too, if you can pull any datum out of the subconscious. And you can—do everything, can't you?"

"No," he said. "I'm only a test case. They've learned a great deal by observing me but the only thing that makes me unusual is that I have conscious control of certain normally subconscious and involuntary functions. Not all of them by a long shot. And I don't use that control any more than necessary.

"There are sound biological reasons why man's mind is so divided and plenty of penalties attached to a case like mine. It'll take me a couple of months to get back in shape after this bout. I'm due for a good old-fashioned nervous breakdown and while it won't last long it won't be much fun while it does last."

The appeal rose in his eyes as he watched Elena. "All right," he said. "Now you have the story. What are you going to do about it?"

For the first time she gave him a real smile. "Don't worry," she said. "Don't worry, Simon."

"Will you come hold my hand while I'm recuperating?" he asked anxiously.

"I'm holding it now, you fool," Elena answered.

Dalgetty chuckled happily. Then he went to sleep.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

jimsy and the monsters

by . . . Walt Sheldon

Hollywood could handle just about anything — until Mildume's machine brought in two real aliens.

MR. MAXIMILIAN UNTZ regarded the monsters with a critical eye. Script girls, cameramen, sometimes even stars quailed under Mr. Untz's critical eye—but not these monsters. The first had a globelike head and several spidery legs. The second was willowy and long-clawed. The third was covered with hair. The prop department had outdone itself.

"Get Jimsy," said Mr. Untz, snapping his fingers.

A young earnest assistant producer with a crew cut turned and relayed the summons. "Jimsy—Jimsy LaRoche!" Down the line of cables and cameras it went. *Jimsy . . . Jimsy. . . .*

A few moments later, from behind the wall flat where he had been playing canasta with the electricians, emerged Jimsy LaRoche, the eleven-year-old sensation. He took his time. He wore powder-blue slacks and a sports shirt and his golden hair was carefully ringleted. He was frowning. He had been interrupted with a meld of a hundred and twenty.

"Okay, so what is it now?" he said, coming up to Mr. Untz.

Mr. Untz turned and glared

Science fiction, in collaboration with the idea-men and technicians of Hollywood, has been responsible for many horrors, dating back to "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" and "The Lost World." But Hollywood has created one real-life horror that tops all creations of fantasy — the child star. In this story we at last see such a brat meet Things from Alien Space.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

down at the youth. Jimsy returned the glare. There was a sort of cold war between Mr. Untz and Master Jimsy LaRoche, the sort you could almost hear hotting up. Mr. Untz pointed to the monsters. "Look, Jimsy. Look at them. What do you think?" He watched the boy's expression carefully.

Jimsy said, "To use one of your own expressions, Max—*pfui*. They wouldn't scare a mouse." And then Jimsy shrugged and walked away.

Mr. Untz turned to his assistant. "Harold," he said in an injured tone. "You saw it. You heard it. You see what I've got to put up with."

"Sure," said Harold Potter sympathetically. He had mixed feelings toward Mr. Untz. He admired the producer's occasional flashes of genius, he deplored his more frequent flashes of stupidity. On the whole, however, he regarded himself as being on Mr. Untz's side in the war between Mr. Untz and the world and Hollywood. He knew Mr. Untz's main trouble.

Some years ago Maximilian Untz had been brought to Hollywood heralded as Vienna's greatest producer of musicals. So far he had been assigned to westerns, detectives, documentaries, a fantasy of the future—but no musicals. And now it was a psychological thriller. Jimsy played the killer as a boy and there was to be a dream sequence, a nightmare full of monsters. Mr. Untz was determined it should be the most terrifying dream sequence ever filmed.

Only up to now he wasn't doing so good.

"I would give," said Mr. Untz to Harold Potter, "my right eye for some *really* horrible monsters." He gestured at the world in general. "Think of it, Harold. We got atom bombs and B-29's, both vitamins and airplanes, and stuff to cure you of everything from broken legs to dropsy. A whole world of modern science—but nobody can make a fake monster. It looks anything but fake and wouldn't scare an eleven-year-old boy."

"It's a thought," agreed Harold Potter. He had a feeling for things scientific; he had taken a B.S. in college but had drifted into photography and thence into movie production. He had a wife and a spaniel and a collection of pipes and a house in Santa Monica with a workshop basement.

"I got to do some thinking," Mr. Untz said. "I believe I will change my clothes and take a shower. Come along to the cottage, Harold."

"Okay," said Harold. He never liked to say yes for fear of being tagged a yes-man. Anyway, he enjoyed relaxing in the office-cottage while Mr. Untz showered and changed, which Mr. Untz did some three or four times a day. When he got there Mr. Untz

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

disappeared into the dressing-room and Harold picked up a magazine.

There was a knock on the door.

Harold got up and crossed the soft cream-colored carpet and opened the door and saw a goat-like person.

"Yes?" said Harold.

"Mildume," said the goat-like person. "Dr. John Mildume. Don't ask a lot of questions about how I got in. Had a hard enough time as it was. Fortunately I have several relatives connected with the studio. That's how I heard of your problem as a matter of fact."

"My problem?" said Harold.

Dr. Mildume pushed right in. He was no more than five feet five but had a normal sized head. It was domelike. Wisps of tarnished white hair curled about his ears and crown. He had an outthrust underjaw with a small white beard on its prow. He was dressed in moderately shabby tweeds. He moved across the room in an energetic, hopping walk and took the place on the sofa Harold had vacated.

"Now, then, Mr. Untz," he said, "the first thing we must do is come to terms."

"Just a minute," said Harold. "I'm Mr. Untz's assistant, Harold Potter. Mr. Untz is in the shower. Was he expecting you?"

Dr. Mildume blinked. "No, not exactly. But he can't afford *not* to see me. I know all about it."

"All about what?" asked Harold.

"The beasts," the doctor said.

"The *which?*"

"Beasts, Potter," snapped the goat-like man. "The nightmare monsters. Get with it, lad. And what is a dream sequence without them? Ha!"

"Uh—yes," said Harold a little uncertainly.

Mildume's finger shot out. "You fellows understand that I'm no dreamy-eyed impractical scientist. Let's face it—it takes money to carry on experiments like mine. Good old-fashioned money. I'll need at least ten thousand dollars."

Harold raised his eyebrows. "Just what, Dr. Mildume, do you propose to give us for ten thousand dollars?"

"Beasts," said Mildume. "*Real* monsters."

"I beg your pardon?" said Harold. He began to work out strategies in his mind. Maybe he could casually walk over to the phone and pick it up quickly and call the studio police. Maybe he could get the jump on this madman before he pulled a knife. The thing to do was to humor him meanwhile . . .

Dr. Mildume said, "I will not deal with underlings. I demand to see Mr. Untz himself."

"Well," said Harold, "you understand that Mr. Untz is a busy man. It's my job to check propositions people have for him. Suppose you tell me about these beasts of yours."

Mildume shrugged. "Doubt

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

if you'll understand it any better than Untz will. But it's no more complicated than television when you boil it right down. You're familiar, I take it, with the basic principle of television?"

"Oh, sure," said Harold, brightening. "Keep things moving. Have a master of ceremonies who keeps jumping in and out of the act. Give something away to the audience, if possible, to make them feel ashamed not to tune in."

"No, no, no, no, *no!*" said Mildume. "I mean the technical principles. A photo-electric beam scans the subject, translates light and dark into electrical impulses, which eventually alter a cathode ray played upon a fluorescent screen. Hence, the image. You grasp that roughly, I take it?"

"Roughly," said Harold.

"Well," continued Mildume, "just as spots of light and dark are the building blocks of an image, so sub-atomic particles are the building blocks of matter. Once we recognize this the teleportation theory becomes relatively simple. There are engineering difficulties, of course.

"We must go back to Faraday's three laws of electrolysis—and Chadwick's establishment in nineteen thirty-one of the fact that radiation is merely the movement of particles of proton mass without proton charge. Neutrons, you see. Also that atomic weights are close integers, when hydrogen is one point zero zero eight. Thus I use hydrogen as a basis. Simple, isn't it?"

Harold frowned. "Wait a minute. What's this you're talking about—*teleportation?* You mean a way of moving matter through space, just as television moves an image through space?"

"Well, not precisely," said Mildume. "It's more a duplication of matter. My Mildume beam —really another expression of the quanta or light energy absorbed by atoms—scans and analyzes matter. The wave variations are retranslated into form, or formulae, at a distant point—the receiving point."

Harold lowered one eyebrow. "And this really works?"

"Of course," said Mildume. "Oh, it's still crude. It doesn't work all the time. It works only along vast distances. I won't announce it until I perfect it further. Meanwhile I need more money to carry on and when, through certain relatives, I heard of Mr. Untz's problem—well, it was simply too much to resist. You see, I've managed to teleport a couple of frightful monsters from somewhere out of space. I was wondering what on earth to do with them."

"Where—where are they?" asked Harold.

"In my back yard," said Dr. Mildume.

At that point Mr. Maximilian Untz abruptly reappeared. He smelled of lotion and he was now dressed in a relatively conserva-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tive gabardine of forest green with a lavender shirt and a black knitted tie.

"Hello," he said. He looked at Mildume. "So who is this?"

"He says he has monsters for the dream sequence in his back yard," explained Harold. *"Real* ones."

"Look," said Mr. Untz, "kindly ask the gentleman to get lost, will you, Harold?"

"No, wait," Harold said. "He may have something. He explained some of it to me. It sounds almost possible. We can't lose much by taking a look."

"Only a few thousand dollars a minute," said Mr. Untz.

"Bah—money!" said Dr. Mildume. "Which reminds me—these monsters of mine are going to cost you. Let's have that understood, right now."

Mr. Untz's eyebrows went up. This kind of talk he understood. He reached into the side pocket of the gabardine for his cigarette case. He kept a separate gold case in each suit.

"Yeeeeow!" said Mr. Untz.

His hand came out of the pocket with a small green snake in it.

"Drop it! Stand back!" said Harold, being cool.

"Don't worry about it," said Dr. Mildume in a calmer voice. He was blinking mildly at the snake. "It's merely an ordinary species of garden snake, sometimes erroneously called garter snake. Curious it should be there."

Harold looked at Dr. Mildume sharply. "This teleportation of yours wouldn't have anything to do with it by any chance?"

"Of course not," snapped Mildume.

"I know how it got here!" said Mr. Untz, his jowls trembling. He had already dropped the snake. "A certain child star whose initials are Jimsy LaRoche! Last week he gives me a hotfoot. Monday a wet seat—soaked newspapers in my chair under one thin dry one. Yesterday a big frog in my shower. I should take that brat over my knee and spank him to his face!"

"Mm—ah—of course," said Dr. Mildume without much interest in the topic. "Shall we go to inspect the monsters now?"

Mr. Untz thought it over, only long enough to keep himself within the time limits of a Man of Decision. Then he said, "Okay, so we'll go now."

They passed Jimsy LaRoche on the way out. He was drinking pineapple juice and sitting with his tutor, studying his lines. He smirked as Mr. Untz passed. Mr. Untz scowled back but didn't say anything. In Jovian silence he led the way to his car.

It turned out to be a longer ride than they had expected. Dr. Mildume lived in Twenty-nine Palms and, as Mr. Untz explained it, this was too short for an airplane and too long for an auto-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mobile. Mr. Untz was not in his best humor when they stopped before Dr. Mildume's stucco and tile-roof house.

Mildume directed them immediately to a walled-in patio in the rear of the place. A shed-roof covered one side of the patio and under it were racks of equipment. Harold recognized banks of relays, power amplifiers, oscillographs and some other familiar devices. There were also some strange ones.

Mildume waved his long fingers at all of it. "My teleportation set-up is entirely too bulky so far for practical use, as you can see."

"Nph," said Mr. Untz, eyeing it. During the drive Dr. Mildume and Harold had explained more to him about teleportation and the monsters and he was more doubtful than ever about the whole thing. "So let's see the monsters," he said now. "Time is fleeing."

Mildume went in his hopping step across the patio to a huge tarpaulin that covered something square and bulky. He worried the tarpaulin away. Two steel cages stood there.

"Sacred carp!" said Mr. Untz.

Two *somethings* were in the steel cages.

They were both iridescent greenish-gray in color, they had globular bodies, no discernible heads and eyes on stalks growing from their bodies. Three eyes apiece. If they *were* eyes—anyway, they looked like eyes. Sweeping fibrillae came down to the ground and seemed to serve as feet. Great saw-toothed red gashes in the middle of each body might have been mouths.

"They're—they're *real*. They're *alive!*" said Harold Potter hoarsely. That was the thing about them. They had the elusive quality of life about them—and of course they were thus infinitely more terrifying than the prop department's fake monsters.

"They're alive all right," said Dr. Mildume chattily. "Took me quite a bit of experimenting to discover what to feed them. They like glass—broken glass. They're evidently a silicon rather than a carbon form of life."

"This I'll buy," said Mr. Untz, still staring.

"Of course," said Mildume. "I knew you would. They will cost you exactly ten thousand dollars per day. Per twenty-four hour period."

"Profiteer—burglar!" said Mr. Untz, glaring at Mildume.

Mildume shrugged.

There was an abrupt, high-pitched squeak. Harold stared at the monsters. The smaller one was quivering.

"They do that when they're angry," Dr. Mildume said. "Some sort of skin vibration. This smaller one here seems to take the initiative in things. Must be a male. Unless there's female dominance, as in birds of prey, wherever these things come from. I've—uh—been unable to ascer-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tain which is which, if any."

Mr. Untz frowned suddenly. "Look—just how dangerous are these things?"

"Don't know *exactly*," said Dr. Mildume. "A pigeon got too near the cages the other day. They seemed to enjoy it. Although, as I say, their staple appears to be silicon forms. I carelessly set a Weston analyzer too near them the other day and they had it for lunch."

"If they're too dangerous . . ." began Mr. Untz.

"What if they are?" said Mildume. "You make pictures with wild lions and tigers and alligators, don't you? Seems to me you can find a way. I don't recommend letting them out of the cage however."

Mr. Untz nodded and said, "Well, maybe we can get Etienne Flaubert to do something with them. He's the animal trainer we call on. Anyway Untz always figures something out. Only that's why I like musicals better. There isn't so much to figure out and you can play Victor Herbert backwards and get new tunes out of him. So anyway, we'll get a truck and get these monsters to the studio right away."

It was arranged. It was arranged with utmost secrecy too. There were other studios, after all, and in spite of their wealth of creative talent it was easier to steal an idea than cook up a new one. Atom bomb secrecy descended upon the Crusader Pictures lot and most especially upon Sound Stage Six, where the dream sequence for the psychological thriller, "Jolt!" was being filmed.

Even Jimsy LaRoche, the star of the picture, was excluded from the big barn-like stage. Mr. Untz prepared to get his first stock shots of the beasts.

There were gasps and much popping of eyebrows when Dr. Mildume—who had come along as technical adviser—removed the tarpaulins from the cages. The cameramen, the grips, the electricians, the sound men—all stared unbelievingly. The script girl grabbed Mr. Untz's hand and dug her fingernails into it. The makeup stylist clutched the lapels of his mauve jacket and fainted.

"Nothing to be afraid of," Mr. Untz said to everybody. He was sort of convincing himself too. "Dr. Mildume here knows all about the monsters. He's got everything under control. So tell everybody about them, Doctor."

Mildume nodded, bobbing his short white beard. He thrust his hands into his tweed jacket, looked all around for a moment, then said, "I don't know exactly where the monsters are from. I had my Q-beam pointed into space, and I was focussing it, intending to put it on Mars at the time of proper conjunction. All very complicated. However the beam must have worked prematurely. These monsters began to form in the hydrogen chamber."

Several of the listeners looked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at other listeners with unmistakable doubt. Unruffled, Dr. Mildume went on, "Now, we can make certain rough assumptions from the form and structure of these monsters. You will notice that except for their appendages they are globularly formed. Any engineer can tell you that the arch and hemisphere sustain the greatest weight for their mass.

"We may concede that they come from a planet of very strong gravity. Their skin, for instance, is tough and rigid compared with ours. They have difficulty staying rooted to earth—often a simple multipod movement will send them bouncing to the top of the cage. There is one other factor—the smaller of these creatures seems the more dominant—suggesting that on their home planet smaller beings are more agile and therefore better able to take care of themselves."

"There, you see?" interrupted Mr. Untz, slipping into a pause. "That's all there is to it. So now let us please get down to business."

So they got down to business. And it was not easy business, photographing these monsters. Keeping the cage wires out of focus required a critical distance for each lens but whenever a camera came too near a fibrilla would shoot forward—at the glass, no doubt—and scare the wits out of the cameramen.

The shorter lenses got too much of the surrounding area into the picture. The crew tried and tried. One technician muttered darkly that the organization contract didn't cover this sort of thing. Mr. Untz pleaded and cajoled and heckled and moved about and tried to keep things going. Somehow, anyhow.

Eddie Tamoto, the chief cameraman, finally came up to him and said, "It's no use, Max. These cages simply don't allow us to do anything. Why don't we put them in the cages they use for jungle pictures? They're big and camouflaged, and the mesh size is right."

"So maybe we'll have to do that," said Mr. Untz.

Dr. Mildume dipped his head. "I don't know. I'd like to see these other cages first."

"Look," said Mr. Untz. "Don't worry about it. If they hold lions they will hold your whatever-you-call-thems. I'll get the animal trainer, Flaubert, to stand by. He practically talks to animals—except horses, which is his hard luck."

The jungle cages were duly summoned and so was Etienne Flaubert of the Golden West Animal Education Studios on Sunset Boulevard. While they waited Mr. Untz stood aside with Harold Potter. He mopped his brow—he gestured at the whole group. "This," he said, "is the story of my life."

"It is?" asked Harold.

Mr. Untz nodded. "Me, I am an expert on musicals. Musicals

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I can do with my left hand. But ever since I am in Hollywood I do everything *but* a musical. And always something gets fouled up. Always there is trouble. You will not believe this, Harold, but I am an unhappy man."

"I believe it," said Harold.

Mr. Untz looked at him sharply and said, "You don't have to believe it so quickly. You could give me a chance to explain."

"Look," said Harold—now being truly interested and forgetting some of the first principles of buttering-up one's boss, "take the scientific attitude. Everything is *relative*."

"Yes," said Mr. Untz, "In Hollywood everything is relatives, believe me."

"No, no—I wasn't referring to nepotism," said Harold. "I was thinking that you and many others, of course, prefer musicals. But there are vast other groups who prefer westerns, detectives, comedies or what have you. One man's meat is another's poison.

"But nourishment stays the same in principle. The artistic demands still hold and a good picture is a picture, whatever its field. Now, if you, as a producer, can shift to the other fellow's viewpoint—find out why the thing that terrifies you amuses him—or vice versa."

"Harold," said Mr. Untz, not without suspicion, "are you an assistant producer or a philosopher?"

"Sometimes to be the one," sighed Harold, "you have to be the other."

The big jungle cage arrived presently. While it was being set up another assistant came to Mr. Untz and said, "Jimsy LaRoche is outside, yelling to get in, Mr. Untz."

Mr. Untz whirled on the assistant and said, "Tell that overpaid brat—who I personally didn't want in my picture in the first place—tell him in the second place the President of the United States could not get in here this afternoon. No, wait a minute, that wouldn't mean anything to him—he makes more money than the President. Just tell him no."

"Yes, sir," said the assistant. He left.

About then the animal trainer, Etienne Flaubert, was admitted. He walked right up to Mr. Untz. Flaubert was nearly seven feet tall. He had tremendous shoulders and none of it was coat padding. He had a chest one might have gone over Niagara Falls in. He had a huge golden beard. When he spoke it sounded like the bass viol section of the Los Angeles Symphony tuning up.

He said to Mr. Untz, "Where are these monsters I hear about? I'd like to see the monster that isn't just a big kitty, like all the rest. Big kitties, that's all they are. You gotta know how to handle them."

Mr. Untz led Flaubert to the cage and said, "There."

Flaubert gasped. Then he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

steadied himself. The monsters had been maneuvered into the bigger cage by now—Dr. Mildume had enticed them with broken electric light bulbs and slammed the drop-doors behind them by a remote-control rope. They had finished their meal of glass. They were curled in a corner of the cage now, tentacles wrapped about each other, squeaking contentedly.

Flaubert recovered a bit.

"Kitties, just big kitties," he growled.

Eddie Tamoto called, "Hey, Max, we'd like to get 'em in the center of the cage for a shot." He was gesturing from the camera boom seat. "Only moving around. You know—looking fierce."

"Can you do it, Flaubert?" said Mr. Untz, turning to the big trainer.

"Just big kitties," said Flaubert.

He had brought his own whip and blank cartridge pistol. His assistant stood by with a .30-30 rifle. Dr. Mildume opened the door quickly and Flaubert slipped into the cage.

"Okay—get set, everybody!" yelled Mr. Untz. People scurried. An attendant switched on the warning light and rocker arm that warned people outside of the stage not to barge in. "Quiet!" yelled Mr. Untz. "Quiet—*quiet!*" yelled several assistants. The order went down the line. Through channels.

And there stood Etienne Flaubert, huge and more or less unafraid, in the middle of the cage. The monsters in the corner began slowly to uncoil their tentacles from about each other. Their eye stalks rose and began to wave slowly. Their red saw-toothed mouths worked into pouts, gapes and grins.

The smaller of the two suddenly shuddered all over. Its angry chirping noise shrilled through the sound stage. Its tough skin vibrated—blurred. It sprang suddenly to its multipods and charged Flaubert.

Flaubert screamed an unholy scream. He threw the chair and the whip and the gun at the monster and dove from the exit. Dr. Mildume opened the cage door with his rope and Flaubert went through it—himself a blur. The monster, in his wake, slammed into the door and stayed there, trembling, still chirping its rage.

"Hully gee, what kitties!" said Flaubert, pale and sweating.

Mr. Untz groaned.

"I got some of it!" yelled Eddie Tamoto from his camera. "It was terrific! But we need more!"

Then—simultaneously—there were several loud screams of alarm. Mr. Untz looked at the cage again. The smaller monster had found a crack, and was moving the cage door and squeezing through.

"Harold!" shouted Mr. Untz. *"Do something!"*

Harold stepped forward. "Back everybody," he said in his best

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

calm voice. "Walk—do not run —to the nearest exit."

The second monster was already vibrating across the cage and the smaller one was holding the door open for it. Dr. Mildume had tried to maneuver the control ropes to close the door again, but hadn't been able to work them—and now he had left his post.

Harold pointed to the man with the rifle and said, "Fire!"

The rifleman fired.

Nothing—nothing at all happened. He fired several times more. The monsters didn't even jerk when the bullets hit them.

"They're—they're impervious yet!" cried Mr. Untz.

After that it was every man for himself.

Moments later Harold found himself outside of the sound stage and on the studio street, bunched with the others and staring at the thick closed door. Nobody spoke. Everybody just thrummed silently with the knowledge that two alien monsters were in there, wreaking heaven knew what damage . . .

And then, as they stared, the thick door began to open again. "It isn't locked!" breathed Mr. Untz. "Nobody remembered to lock it again!"

A tentacle peeked out of the crack of the door.

Everybody scattered a second time.

Harold never remembered the order in which things happened amidst the confusion that followed. It seemed he and Mr. Untz ran blindly, side by side, down the studio street for awhile. It seemed all kinds of people were also running, in all kinds of directions.

Bells were ringing—sirens blew —a blue studio police car took a corner on two wheels and barely missed them. Harold had a glimpse of uniformed men with drawn pistols.

They ended up somehow at Mr. Untz's office-cottage. They went inside and Mr. Untz locked the door and slammed his back to it. He leaned there, panting. He said, "Trouble, trouble, trouble. I should have stayed in Vienna. And in Vienna I should have stood in bed."

The door of the shower and dressing-room opened and Jimsy LaRoche came out. He had a number of snails in his outstretched hand and he coolly kept them there, making no attempt to conceal his obvious purpose in the shower. He looked directly at Mr. Untz with his dark disconcerting eleven-year-old eyes and said, "Well, Max, what goof-off did you pull this time?"

"You!" roared Mr. Untz, whirling and shooting a finger at the child star. A focusing point for all his troubles, at last. His jowls shook. "You, Jimsy LaRoche," he said, "are going to get your first old fashioned spanking on the bottom! From me, personally!" He advanced toward the boy, who backed away hastily.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jimsy began to look a little frightened.

"Now wait a minute, Max," said Harold, stepping forward. "We've got enough *big* monsters to think about without worrying about this *little* monster too."

Mr. Untz stared at Harold queerly. Suddenly he said, "Why didn't I think of it before?"

"Think of what?" asked Harold.

But Mr. Untz had already grabbed Jimsy LaRoche's hand and dragged him through the door.

There were several reasons why Harold Potter did not immediately pursue. For one thing he stood there for several moments stupified with surprise. Then, when he did recover, he plunged forward and promptly tripped on the cream-colored carpet and fell flat on his face. He tripped again going over the step to the cottage door. He bumped into a studio policeman rounding the next corner. He snagged his coat on a fence picket going around the corner after that. But he kept Mr. Untz and the dragged youngster in sight.

Eventually he came to the door of Sound Stage Six.

Speaking from a police standpoint all laymen had disappeared. A ring of studio police and firemen, along with some policemen and detectives from the outside, had been drawn around the monsters and everybody and his brother was shooting off pistols and rifles at them. With no result, of course. Nor did anyone dare get too close.

Harold caught up with Mr. Untz about the time a man he recognized as a reporter did. The reporter was stout, freckled and bespectacled.

"*Untz!*" barked the reporter, with all the power of the press in his voice, "do you realize this is a national danger? If those monsters can't be stopped by bullets, what will stop them? Where will it all end? Where did they come from?"

"Look in tomorrow's paper!" growled Mr. Untz, brushing the reporter aside. He kept Jimsy's arm in a firm grip. Jimsy was bawling at the top of his lungs now. Mr. Untz breasted the police cordon, broke through.

"Max! *Stop!*" shouted Harold. "Max—have you gone mad?"

Max evidently had. He moved so swiftly that everyone was too surprised to stop him. He burst into the small human-walled arena where the two bewildered monsters squatted and he thrust little Jimsy LaRoche out before him—right at the monsters.

An extraordinary thing happened. The monsters suddenly began to quiver and squeak again but this time—it was clear to the ear somehow—not with rage, but with *fear*. Pure and terrible fear. They trained their eye-stalks on Jimsy LaRoche, they paled to a lighter shade of brown and green, then slowly they began to back away.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Hold your fire, men!" called a police captain, probably just to get into the act.

Dr. Mildume appeared again from somewhere. So did Etienne Flaubert. So did Eddie Tamoto and some of the other technicians. They gaped and stared.

Slowly, inexorably, using Jimsy LaRoche as his threat, Mr. Untz backed the two monsters into the studio, and gradually to the cage. Dr. Mildume leaped forward to shut them in once more.

And through it all Jimsy LaRoche continued to bawl at the top of his lungs.

Later, in Mr. Untz's office-cottage, Harold read the newspaper accounts. He read every word while Mr. Untz was in the other room taking a shower. He had to admit that Max had even thrown a little credit his way. "My assistant, Mr. Potter," Untz was quoted as saying, "indirectly gave me the idea when he said that one man's meat was another man's poison.

"Dr. Mildume had already explained that the monsters came from a high-gravity planet—that the smaller of the species evidently seemed the more capable, and therefore the dominant one." Harold was sure now that the statement had been polished up a bit by the publicity department.

"The only logical assumption, then," the statement continued, "was that small stature would dominate these life forms, rather than large stature, as in the environment we know. They were, in other words, terrified by tiny Jimsy LaRoche—whose latest picture, 'The Atomic Fissionist and the Waif,' is now at your local theatre, by the way—as an Earth-being might have been terrified by a giant!"

Mr. Untz came out of the shower at that point. He was radiant in a canary-colored rayon sharkskin. He was rubbing his hands. He was beaming.

"Harold," he said, "they're putting me on a musical next. I got them twined around my little finger. Life is good. I think that screwy Dr. Mildume was smart to send those things back out into space before they could get to him. Otherwise we might have *had* to put them in pictures and with contracts yet"

"Max," said Harold, staring at him quietly.

"Yes, Harold?"

"Just answer me one thing truthfully. I swear I'll never repeat it—or even blame you. But for my own curiosity I've got to know."

"Why certainly, Harold, what is it?"

Harold Potter swallowed hard. "Did you," he asked, *"really* figure out that Jimsy would scare the beasts—or were you about to *throw* the little brat to them?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

never on mars

by . . . John Wyndham

Jeremy got to Mars, all right, but nobody else came back. And so people would not believe he had actually been there at all.

THE ODDS are that they won't actually put Jeremy Chambet in jail. After all, a jury has to be satisfied beyond all doubt that any fraud was committed, much less by criminal intent. And I don't see how, in spite of the newspapers and the radio and all the talk, some of the panel can fail to have a doubt or two.

All the evidence is circumstantial—or expert. Juries feel a bit uneasy when it's entirely circumstantial. Nor are they very fond of expert witnesses. They're impressed in a way, but antagonistic too. In the course of their lives they have all at some time or other had expert advice that turned out to be wrong.

All the same, Jeremy Chambet is in a spot. Public fickleness must be hell. First they put you on top of the world—then, given a whiff of righteous motive for an excuse, the whole lot will turn right round and jump on your neck with a jealous sadistic satisfaction. Nearly everybody is delighted to find himself holier than a hero in some way.

Jeremy's story hasn't sounded too good. Still, even Truth isn't dressed non-crushably—and after

Mr. Wyndham, the man who put that poisonous alien vegetable called the triffid into the science fiction salad bowl, here tackles a subject a bit more human, also perhaps a bit more deadly. Which is the insistence among men and women of science of belief — even though such belief be demanded of theories which empirical experience proves teetotally false.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she has been mauled around awhile she doesn't look quite flavor-sealed-in, either.

When Jeremy told me the story in his own way soon after he got back it sounded fantastic, of course—any story told by the first man back from Mars was bound to sound fantastic—but that isn't to say that it sounded untrue. Not necessarily anyway. It wasn't till the prosecution took to pounding away at it that it began to look like hash.

Just to refresh your memory...

Not even the defense claims that Jeremy was the first man to reach Mars. Their contention is that he's the first one to come back—and the source of his trouble is that so far he's the *only* one to come back.

There were, you will remember, a crew of three aboard General Rockets' ship, *Uniac 5*. Christopher Deeley was Captain—an excellent navigator with wide experience in rocketry, theoretical and practical, fine physique, dependable personality, altogether a first-class choice for the job.

There was Jeremy Chambet, a physicist of considerable reputation, no laboratory hermit, going along to observe and record technical data.

And Peter Quorridge who, after a roving career chasing up troubles in all corners of the Earth as a special correspondent, had won the job of representing the eyes and ears of the world on the trip.

The take-off was noted but not played up in the Press. It was about the tenth or twelfth shot—or maybe it would have had a still higher number if the Russians didn't regard secrecy and misinformation as the prime national virtues.

Since nothing had been heard of the others after they passed the radio-reflecting layers, news value and expectations had dwindled. Moreover Jeremy's statement on what they expected to find could only have made the ordinary reader wonder why anyone was fool enough even to start. Those who did read it just wrote off another expensive ship and three more nuts.

But this time they were wrong. Several months later *Uniac 5*'s automatic radio signals were picked up. Then came Jeremy's voice calling. He was circling and reducing speed, he said. He was alone. He had no hope of landing the ship safely, so he proposed to drop her in the sea. His intention was to slow to a stop, check fall, shut off power and bale out before velocity mounted again. He'd leave the automatic going for stations to keep a fix on him.

The last wasn't entirely necessary. The *Uniac 5* not only assaulted the ears of the inhabitants of San Salvador Island in the Bahamas by thundering round their sky but treated them to unusual glimpses of a celestial firecracker gone crazy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jeremy explained afterwards that he could not get the balance of the thing right to keep it sitting on its jets. Every time he used the lateral stabilizers they overcorrected, first one way and then the other, until the thing swung over and whizzed off at an angle, so then he'd have to fight for height in order to have another try.

The wonder of it was, considering he had never tried to handle a rocket before, that he didn't destroy it and himself at the first attempt. Finally, however, this cavorting had to come to an end because his fuel ran out, so then he had to jump for it anyway.

The *Uniac 5* came down at high speed and blew up like a geyser—maybe she didn't have any fuel but his haywire antics up there had run her tubes mighty hot. Jeremy himself dropped into the drink twenty miles away and floated around, firing smoke signals at intervals, until a helicopter came and dangled a ladder for him.

Well, it's not likely you've forgotten the hoopla that followed. The contracts for advertising, radio, movies and the rest of it came raining in. Jeremy was sitting pretty with mountains of dollars growing up on all sides. But Jeremy isn't a mean man.

As far as we know no close relative of Peter Quorridge exists. But Chris Deeley had left a widow, Monica, and two children. Jeremy made over to them one half of the receipts. It was generous. When his friends pointed out, "It was *you* that took the risk. One third is fair enough, for her," he replied. "Well, it was Chris who got us there—and landed us safely."

The prize-money was what began the trouble. The New York *Epoch* had offered the largest—one million dollars to the first crew to make the two-way journey—but there were a number of others, not negligible by any means.

The *Epoch* is not one of the ornaments of journalism. Maybe it gambled that there would never be a call for the cash. When the call came the *Epoch* thought it over and then informed Jeremy that since only one third of the crew had made the double journey it had decided to award only one third of the prize. That seemed a good idea to one or two other offerers, unexpectedly facing the results of their prodigal gestures.

Jeremy didn't worry. More dollars than he had ever thought of were rolling towards him anyway, more than he knew how to use. But Monica Deeley was a tougher proposition. "Enough" was a word that she kept shut up in the dictionary. The moment she got the sharing agreement with Jeremy signed up she put in a claim against the *Epoch* and its similar-minded friends for payment in full.

The sympathy was all with her and Jeremy Chambet to begin

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with, but then rumors got going—from a guessable source. After all, there was only Jeremy's word for what had happened on the expedition. The *Uniac 5*, with such records as might exist, lay scattered at the bottom of the sea.

It occurred to someone to turn Jeremy's own generosity against him—after all he had no need to give Monica Deeley more than a third share, no compulsion to do even that. So was there something behind it? Conscience money . . . ?

A very distant relative of Quorridge showed up and put in a claim on the ground of Peter's intestacy and as good as accused Jeremy of murdering both of his companions for the sake of the prize-money. A few newspapers remained staunch but a number of the more sensational moved over to the side of the *Epoch*, which by this time had the characters of both Jeremy and Monica in shreds.

The *Epoch* lost its case and appealed. In addition, the libel writs had begun to fly. In the middle of it all Monica Deeley sprang a mine by going to the police and alleging that Jeremy had confessed to murdering her husband in order that he could marry her.

It was by no means a likely story but a lot of people pounced on it as an explanation of his generosity—that he intended to have the lot in the end, even if he had to marry Monica to get it. And once the charge had been made the authorities were unable to ignore it.

Monica Deeley is a fool—a dangerous fool. If she had let the whole thing alone and just sat back, taking the dollars as they came along, they'd both have had all they could ever want. Whoever it was that suggested to her that if Jeremy were put out of the way she would rake it all in has a lot to answer for. Now she stands to lose badly whatever happens. For the charge failed to hold water, of course.

However, Jeremy still has to sit there in court and hear himself shredded. They have gleefully tripped him in a memory slip or two such as anyone's memory might make—but he has made no contradictions of his main story and he is sticking to it. The trouble is not many people believe him any more. Jeremy is becoming a second Dr. Cook, of North Pole infamy.

By this time we have all become so confused with the comments of the newspapers, and those of learned counsel, that what Jeremy actually said in the first place is becoming obscure. So let me give you the story as he told it to me soon after he had come back, well before the row began and all this forensic talent pitched into him . . .

THE NEXT TIME they send anyone to Mars (said Jeremy Cham-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bet) they might let a competent psychologist in on the selection of the crew. Technical qualifications come first, of course, but the people who have them are going to have to live together at very close quarters and with no privacy whatever for a number of weeks. By far the most troublesome thing to control, when you're shut into a small metal shell out there in Space, is yourself.

Your sense of proportion goes all to pieces. Piddling little things you would never even notice anywhere else can drive you to distraction when they are thrust under your nose day after day and you can't get away from them.

Small habits, mannerisms, tricks of speech—they can get on your nerves in a way that would seem fantastic in ordinary life. Each man has to watch himself all the time to keep from showing how intolerable he finds another man's way of clearing his throat, hesitating for a word, eating his food, and that becomes quite a strain by itself.

Roughly speaking, we were the man of action, the reasoner and the observer. We had been chosen *because* we had been trained to think in different patterns. It may be good coverage but it doesn't make for easy association.

I am a scientist—that is to say that when I have assembled all the proved facts I draw a deduction which includes them *all* as logically as human frailty permits.

Chris Deeley was the man of action, but as a modern, educated man of action he was also considerable of a technician. This gave us at least some ground in common.

But Peter Quorridge! Well, frankly, I don't understand the type. Maybe I could find it amusing for an hour or so in a bar—but the *Uniac 5* was no bar and it was a matter of solid weeks.

It's all right being revolutionary and skeptical about everything at twenty—most of the best are. But you expect a man to outgrow it. Maybe it was having to make a newspaper sensation out of everything that did it with Peter.

The way he watched you when you were speaking—you could almost see his mind picking out bits here and there and building up conclusions which left out all the rest. When, in exasperation, I said that it was more than ordinary perversity in him, something more like downright antirationality, he grinned.

"And you're not even constructive," I added.

He shrugged. "Construction's your job—not mine. And, my word, what you fellows do construct!"

"You'd rather be a demolition expert?"

He put his head on one side, and considered. "I'd not call myself that," he said. "As I see my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

job I'm more like the Standards Bureau. I test. If the breaking strain is low the thing gives. And when I think of all the ethers, elements and crackpot theories you fellows have put up in your time I reckon I represent a pretty necessary safety device."

That should give you some idea of his angle. He'd challenge pretty nearly every theory ever made, and quite a little of that was enough to be intensely exasperating. After all, if you don't have some axioms how do you start going any place at all?

To begin with it wasn't too bad. Once we had got over the start, which is a physically distressing business, we settled down. We arranged a rotation for meals and sleeping based on Earth-time. It's the best you can do—it'd be a lot better if one could sleep most of the twenty-four hours instead of a smaller proportion than usual from lack of exercise. There's a good opening there for a non-habit-forming hypnotic, by the way.

When things began to pall Peter was better off than we were. Chris's periodical course-checks and my observations left us with a lot of unoccupied time but Peter had brought along a stack of notes that he was in the process of working up into a book. We got more bored with reading than he did with writing.

To help pass the time Chris taught me something of Space-navigation. I found it fascinating —it also turned out to be useful. Without it I'd not be here now. But that didn't take up all our time. Among other things, we discussed what we were likely to find on Mars—*if* we made it.

My own expectations were far from sensational. From all I knew I envisaged an almost arid planet. There would be little if any atmosphere. Rigorous cold by night, a day temperature of anything from thirty to eighty degrees at the equator, depending on the season. Polar caps of frozen methane or carbon-dioxide. Possibly, just possibly, a little vegetation of a primitive kind still surviving.

Perhaps the thing that I looked forward to most was clearing up once and for all the matter of those markings to which the astronomer, Schiaparelli, had given the name, in my opinion then so unfortunate, of *canali*.

Chris, of course hoped for more. I could see that though he did not press it he had been affected as most people have by the views of the irresponsible Lowell and others who have taken what seemed to the informed a childishly geomorphic view of the planets. It was while I was pointing out to him what a quantity of romantic mischief had originated in Flagstaff, Arizona, that I became aware Peter had stopped writing and was listening with his eyebrows slightly raised.

"You honestly believe that's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

all we're going to find—Just red deserts?" he put in.

"Orange deserts—there's a refractional effect," I told him.

"All right, orange deserts then, split up by natural cleavages and with an odd patch of lichen here and there?"

"Yes—that's about it," I agreed.

"Then what in heck are we doing here?"

"Well, for one thing we're verifying theory—adding to knowledge."

Peter put away his pen.

"What are you expecting? Mr. Burrough's Barsoom?" I suggested.

"My idea is to find out. If I knew I wouldn't be here. You see, not being a scientist I don't make my approach stuffed with prejudices."

That was the perverse kind of remark I had learned to expect from him. This time I did not rise to it. "You must have some views," I said, mildly.

"Well, I certainly have a number of questions. I want to know, for instance, why your despised *canali* markings take, unlike anything else in nature, the shortest path between two points. Also why the junctions are situated, as a rule, just where you might expect an engineer to put them. Why some astronomers speak of obscuration by clouds when others say there's no atmosphere. Oh, there are a whole lot of things I *want* to know—and intend to know. Only, not being a scientist, I don't explain them to everyone before I *do* know."

"That," I said, "is not only frivolous, it's a contradiction in terms. The word scientist by its very derivation means one who knows."

"In practice," Peter replied gently, "a scientist will often hotly defend a theory, with scientific proofs to show that it is a fact. Now, how can a fact need defense? It just *is*. So what the scientist is really trying to do is to prove his own beliefs—which puts him along with the rest of us, though on a slightly less intelligible level."

What are you to do with a man who talks that way?

"At least," I said to him another time, "science builds theories. If your attitude of mind were general nothing would ever get built at all."

"True," he admitted. "But let's just think where we'd be if there weren't people like me to challenge your scientific theories—and proofs. Offhand I can recall it was proved on paper that iron ships would not float. Then, when they did, disconcertingly for the experts, it was steel ships that wouldn't be seaworthy.

"It was shown with figures that a steamship could not carry enough coal to get her across the Atlantic. Evidence was adduced that the human constitution could not withstand a speed of sixty miles per hour. At the number of times that it was proved that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

heavier-than-aircraft could never fly imagination positively boggles.

"In nineteen twenty-seven the father of a friend of mine gave up an aircraft designing job because it was proved to him that the limit of size of land-based planes had been reached. It was shown that the idea of the internal combustion turbine was comparable on visionary grounds with that of perpetual motion.

"You will yourself remember a lot of the things that were said authoritatively about nuclear fission. As for the possibility of rocket flight . . . And dozens more. But luckily there is always a class of people who don't believe the scientists' conclusions.

"But does that prevent scientists from continuing to prove the next thing is just as impossible? Not a bit of it."

I'm afraid I used to get more than a little heated with him after a time, so that Chris felt it necessary to intervene tactfully. But people ought to have some respect for the opinions of experts in fields where they themselves know nothing. Peter Quorridge seemed to have none. You can't argue unless you have common ground. I told him quite flatly that he was nothing better than an ignoramus in my subjects. He took it quite cheerfully.

"An African witch-doctor told me almost the selfsame thing once —and a Voodoo priest too. It must be a professional tenet," he said.

How would you like to have to put up with week after week of close association with a man who talked such stuff? You see what I mean when I said he was anti-rational? He would, for instance, address me as 'Father.' When I objected he raised his eyebrows.

"My dear fellow, would you deny your calling? You are a priest of this century's mystique. The educated accept you as an authority on the mysteries of nature, the uneducated think you're crazy but a bit dangerous, so they respect you superficially too.

"You can't explain your mysteries to the laity—yes, you often use the actual word—and you call anyone who attempts to do so a vulgarizer. It's a cult, old man. All the characteristics of a priesthood—including profound faith in your own words."

"What a lot of nonsense you do put over," I told him. "You know as well as I do that the difference between the scientific method and the religious is that we deduce from proved facts."

"That's what amazes me. I can remember as a kid coming across a series of diagrams in an old magazine. They showed the build-up of resistance and thus proved scientifically that no airplane could fly faster than the speed of sound. How come—on your showing?"

"Faulty reasoning, of course."

"I see. Nothing wrong with the system. Only the incompetent servant. Just the same way that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that unfortunate woman, Joan of Arc, happened to get burnt."

"If you can't see—oh, go to hell!" I told him.

But Peter just grinned.

Added to the close-quarters living, lack of exercise and sheer boredom was the uncertainty. You forget that afterwards but at the time it tells. Then you don't *know* you are going to make it. The chances are very much against you, and what you *do* know is that all the others who tried before you did *not* make it.

You're very much aware, too, that you don't know why they failed, so you can't take any precautions against whatever it was that made them fail. It's not at all good. While you lie there, trying to sleep, some pretty nasty pictures get into your mind—rockets floating on through Space forever with just a load of human bones aboard—rockets sliced wide open by wandering asteroids—a rocket which has turned into just a patch of metal fragments in the Martian desert.

Things like that are difficult to fence out of your mind. The crew of the *Santa Maria*'s chief worry was whether they would sail over the edge—on the *Uniac 5* we had a lot more possibilities. Maybe death, seeing that it catches up with everyone, isn't so important as we like to think—but it can come in a hell of a lot of nasty ways. And you kind of get to thinking about them . . .

Nearer the end of the trip, when it began to look as if we might really make it, our mood changed. It's the long-term waiting that gets you down. For a definite operation such as a landing you can brace yourself up. And we did. The thing depended on Chris Deeley now and we had a high level of trust in him. Peter Quorridge and I tacitly agreed to forget that we had not been speaking for a couple of weeks and dropped our armed neutrality.

We began to spend more and more time at the telescopes or bending over the projection table. We were fascinated out of our previous boredom. In spite of myself I began to be converted to the belief that the *canali* were artifacts of some kind, that possibly they had even been real canals at one time.

As they became clearer there seemed to be no other explanation. Over dark patches such as *Syrtis Major* and others to which the romanticists have definitely given the title of *sea,* I was still puzzled. So much water was highly unlikely and there was an indefinite quality about the edges. I found myself siding with those who claimed them to be areas of vegetation.

It had been for me to decide the position of our landing, subject to Chris's practical considerations, and I had for some time made up my mind that it should be in the area of the *Ismenius Lacus.* At this great junction of *canali* we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would be able to settle the question for good and all and here, if anywhere, we would be able to find traces of civilization.

I'm not going to be technical. I'll just say that Chris did set us down in a perfect landing somewhere in the northwest quadrant. Around the *Ismenius Lacus* itself the ground was dark and broken for many miles and, in Chris's opinion, likely to be swamp—so he took us some distance to the west along the line of the large channel called the *Duteronilus*.

The first thing I saw when we got the cover off a port was that the sand *was* orange red. I mention that now because in that, if nothing else, my predictions were right. You'll be able to read all the details in my book when it comes out, so now I'll keep as much as possible to what happened.

To my amazement the atmosphere showed sufficient oxygen content to sustain us—rarefied, of course, so that it might have caused us a little distress on Earth, but on Mars it required little output of energy to move our bodies. So, with the temperature showing at over forty, we risked going out without spacesuits.

Peter Quorridge took a deep breath and looked round. "H'm. No bug-eyed monsters anyway—yet," he remarked.

I regret that such a frivolous remark should be the first recorded utterance of a human being upon Mars but I am merely reporting.

Chris insisted that our first task should be to set the rocket up in the starting position. "Just a matter of making it possible to leave in a hurry if we should want to," he explained.

The contingency seemed improbable but we helped him drive an anchor post and fix the trim. The little engine chugged, with its air-intake wide open, and through a fantastic reduction gear got on with the job of pulling her up onto her tail fins.

There wasn't a lot to see, but to me most of it was improbable. The sandy rockset plain I had expected—but not the scrawny bushes that dotted it. They were poor gnarled things with just a few coppery leaves. To the south they grew closer together, to the north they became rapidly fewer. In all directions the land was flat, save to the southeast, where a tumulus of rocks broke the monotony.

Once the rocket was up and the living compartment high in the air we had an extended view. It was Peter who took the first look through the south-facing port. He picked up his glasses, then he grunted and handed them to me. "Lowell winning on points," he said.

Beyond the bushes which thickened into a dark band I saw a gleam.

"Well?" asked Peter. "Now tell me it could be a saltpan."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It *could*," I agreed, "but maybe it *is* water."

We went there the next day. It was a canal, all right—and well filled at that. The edges were fringed with plants not unlike small terrestrial rushes, and where the water began there was plentiful submarine vegetation. Our position gave us a close watery horizon and we could not tell what the width of the canal might be.

To either side of us the bank ran away in a geometrically straight line—so straight in fact that I was surprised. One would have thought that even light wind erosion, which was probably all the wear it ever got, would have indented the edges here and there in time.

We withdrew through the fringe of more sturdy bushes which would have made walking along the actual bank a tiresome business and took an eastward course parallel with the canal, headed in the direction of the rocky pile. The nearer we got, the greater became our interest.

The stones which formed it lay in a jumble upon one another but while we were still some distance away we lost all idea that unaided nature had produced them. The sharp edges of the stones had been worn smooth but the blocks themselves had been squared. We had no doubt that they were the ruins —of something.

But even when we reached them we could make tantalizingly little of them. It seemed tolerably clear that they could not lie as they did by a process of mere collapse. We all agreed that some immensely destructive force must at some time have hurled them about.

Another thing struck us. You would have expected any building or group of buildings close to the canal to front right upon it but this pile stood some three hundred yards back from the bank. On the bank side it was chopped off short in a reasonably straight line.

It looked at first as if the canal must have been narrowed at some time and the line represented the original waterfrontage. But Chris, climbing up on to one of the stones, disposed of that idea. He called to us to follow him and when we did we were able to see that the bare space between the pile and the canal showed traces of foundations in several places.

"Somebody, sometime, has been doing a bit of clearance work around here," said Peter. "By the look of it they took the stones and shipped them down the canal—but quite a while ago."

Chris hesitated over that. He pointed to some of the lower stones in the straight face of the pile. Their edges, unlike those above, were sharp.

"These haven't been exposed anything like as long as the rest," he said.

"Only a few hundred thousand years, maybe," said Peter. "Or are we on Barsoom after all? Be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ware of the bug-eyes and all that?"

"So far," I pointed out, "we've not seen the smallest vestige of animal life of any kind."

"Maybe that's what makes it feel the way it does—even a few desert rats would give it a homey touch," Peter murmured.

We spent the rest of the day taking photographs and collecting specimens. When we got back to the rocket Peter said: "Well, maybe you weren't quite right in the details, Father, but your general slant was okay. If there's anything duller than a worn-out planet I don't want to hear about it."

I spent the first part of the following day labeling specimens and writing up notes. Chris had insinuated himself into the non-habitable part of the ship and was inspecting things there. Peter, after hanging about pensively, went off somewhere on his own. He came back just as we were finishing our midday meal.

He didn't say anything until he had eaten his share and lit a cigarette. Then, "I've found out where the stones went to," he told us.

"Where?" asked Chris.

Peter grinned. "Into the canal," he said.

We both looked at him. You never knew with Peter.

"Who'd want to lug them into the canal?" Chris asked.

"Exactly," Peter agreed. "But that's where they are."

I knew enough of him by now to be sure that he had not finished. "How do you know that?" I said.

"I've seen 'em. During the night I seemed to remember that the bank there isn't quite straight like the rest. It's been worn into a bit of a bow. At first I thought it could have been worn away by the ships or barges or whatever they were using. Then it occurred to me that the stones themselves would have gradually worn away the edge if they'd been pushed into the water."

"That's possible," I agreed. "If anyone had any reason for doing it."

"That's what I wanted to find out. So I took along one of the inflatable mattresses, and floated out a bit on it. It gets deep fairly rapidly but sixty yards or so out you can still see the bottom clearly. And that's where the stones are."

"But that's crazy. Or—you mean the bottom of the canal is paved with them?"

Peter drew on his cigarette. "No I don't. You see, what they apparently were wanted for was—building."

Somewhere in the middle of the following night the rocket fell over—and an exceedingly lucky thing it was for all of us that our couches were free in their gimbals. Since one of their main purposes was to take up shock, none of us suffered more than an abrupt awakening. Chris sat up and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turned on the light. A few loose articles had been thrown into a heap but no damage was done inside.

Peter's voice said comatosely, "Let the damn thing stay put. It can't fall any further."

It seemed sound advice. If the ship were damaged, it would still be just as damaged when daylight came. But that wasn't Chris' way. He wanted to be reassured at once. He got out and sorted his clothes from the heap into which they had all been flung.

It was unfortunate for him that he happened to be balanced on one leg in the act of negotiating his pants when the rocket started to roll. He took several staggering hops before he managed to clutch his couch and haul himself aboard, half clad. At that moment the ship came down with a thud and we bounced on our springs.

"What the devil goes on?" Chris demanded as the ship continued to roll.

It was very odd indeed. The *Uniac 5* wasn't a perfect cylinder as you know. The three atmospheric stabilizing fins projected somewhat beyond her greatest girth. They should have made it quite impossible for her to roll. But they didn't. She rose slightly as she turned, then *thud* again as we bounced once more. There was a secondary thump as the one port cover that was free dumped down on to its gasket on the turn.

Peter lit a cigarette. "There are two possible explanations," he observed. "Either the damn planet's got tilted up someway or something's shoving. *Hell!*" he added, as we thudded over again.

Chris glared at him. "Put that thing out. We might fracture a fuel line or something any minute."

Peter obliged and lay back. We swung in the gimbals while the place turned round us and thudded over again.

"And something with a mighty powerful shove too," he added.

Chris was reaching for a locker door. By the time he had got it open we had turned further so that the entire contents of the cupboard fell out on him—but he succeeded in grabbing the thing he wanted, a flashlight. When the port cover swung free he turned the beam on the port itself.

It was quite useless. The fused-quartz surface just reflected the light, making the darkness outside seem yet denser. Chris cursed. We continued to turn with regular thuds. The port cover looked like buckling its hinges. The next time it thudded shut he jumped down to secure it and managed to get back just before we went over again. He sat there considering for some moments.

Then, choosing his time carefully, he climbed to the pilot-seat and set it free to swing in its gimbals. He considered the instrument board thoughtfully for a minute, then depressed one key

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and held it down. He waited until we had thudded again, then he gave a light touch on another key. A tremor ran through the ship and the turning stopped.

"Fine," said Peter. "Rout of bug-eyed monster."

I was irritated. "That kind of fooling doesn't help. This may be serious," I said.

He turned an amused eye upon me. "You've got a scientific theory," he said. "But me, I take things as they come—not as I think they ought to come."

At that moment we began to turn again and thudded down onto the next fin. Chris played his piece on the lateral firing keys once more. We stopped again.

"I was premature," said Peter, in the following pause. "The bug-eye has patience, and imperviousness to heat—*hey!* Here we go again!"

We did. It was not until Chris had repeated his treatment five or six times that the pause lengthened so that we began to feel it was permanent.

"That would seem to have fixed them," he said with satisfaction.

"If it is 'them,'" Peter said. "We might take a look if we didn't happen to be lying on the entrance-port side."

Next morning, after Chris had rolled us with a lateral blast, we went out to inspect. We now rested somewhat over a hundred yards to the south of our original position. The sand over which the ship had traveled showed not only the indentations made by the fins, but a number of shallow furrows—the kind of track that might be left by a full sack being dragged along. We could make nothing of them. They extended all round the ship as she now lay and stretched away on the other side in a broad trail to the south.

Chris inspected the vessel with increasing relief. "Okay, I think," he said at length. "We have the local gravity to thank for that. Those fins would never have stood it with her Earth-weight."

He debated whether to set her up again or not, then decided against it until we knew more about what was moving her. It would not do her any good to be toppled over once more.

We decided to follow the trail to the south and see what we could find.

"There's only one place that can lead," said Peter and he went into the ship, to emerge shortly carrying a deflated mattress.

He was right. The marks kept on approximately in a straight line. The bushes along the way had been flattened as though by a heavy weight. At the canal the trail ended. We examined the bank carefully for signs that a craft had been moored. There weren't any.

"There's one answer," Peter said, looking at me with raised eyebrows.

When we had inflated the mattress we took turns floating a little

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

way out and looking down into the water. I went second, after Chris.

I don't mind saying that I had doubted Peter. It wasn't that I thought he was putting up a spoof but I half expected to see something fortuitous though maybe bearing a close resemblance to what he fancied. I was wrong. Hanging my head over the edge of the mattress and shielding off reflections as best I could with my hands, I found myself looking down on no jumble of stones but an orderly collection of buildings.

Their design was, of course, strange, yet with an effort of the imagination one could almost fancy himself looking down from the air upon an alien city. One was built on a hillside and sloped away until it dimmed out of sight in the depths. I stared down at it long and incredulously.

It presented so many degrees of improbability beyond the plain fact that it was there at all that I was utterly bewildered. But there was no hallucination about it. I could quite clearly see individual buildings with flat roofs and lane-like streets between them.

I strained my eyes to catch some sign of life or movement down there but saw none save a few small fish-like creatures idling along or nosing inquisitively into crevices. Then I noticed something more. In one or two of the upper buildings that I could see most clearly roof-slabs had fallen in and had not been replaced.

And on considering a 'street' which lay directly beneath me I observed that it was carpeted with weed which stirred as if in a slight current. Its untouched appearance in conjunction with the rest made me feel that I was looking down upon a deserted place.

After a lengthy inspection which told me no more, I paddled back to the others on the bank. Peter looked inquisitive without speaking.

"I don't understand it. I don't understand it at all," I admitted. "They can't be houses that have been submerged. Yet they are simply a dry-land type under water. If we grant for a moment the possibility of an intelligent swimming creature—then we must admit that this is simply not the kind of structure it would build.

"The design just wouldn't suit its nature or its needs. To assume that a creature able to move up and down as easily as sideways would adopt the same general forms we find convenient is arrant nonsense."

Peter nodded. "For once we agree. And that leaves us with a choice of two possibilities, doesn't it? Either the places *were* built by some approximately human types and later submerged—which, as you say, doesn't look likely. Or whatever built them does not swim."

"Some bottom-dwelling form—like a crab, for instance," Chris suggested.

"Maybe—or maybe something

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not a bit like a crab. Somehow I don't see any crustacean evolving a high I.Q.," Peter replied.

"If there is anything there now," I said, "it seems to have abandoned the shallower parts for the deeps."

"Of course there's something there," Peter put in. "Our rocket didn't roll by itself."

We paused, contemplating the possibilities for a moment.

"Well, there's one way of finding out—and that's to go down and have a look," Chris said.

The rest of the day he spent tinkering with one of our hitherto unused space-suits.

"I don't see why it shouldn't make a perfectly good diving-suit," he explained. "I know the pressure will be inverted but it won't be great here even if the depth is considerable—which doesn't seem likely. The trouble will be to keep down. Everything weighs so damned little."

That night I was awakened from a dream of touring Mars along the bottoms of endless canals by a familiar bump.

"Good old bug-eyes back again," muttered Peter.

Chris grunted and swung himself into his chair. He repeated his counter measures but this time they were less effective in dealing with whatever was outside. Sometimes the motion was checked briefly, sometimes not at all. With a gesture of irritation he changed his tactics and let off a blast on the other side. The ship suddenly reversed her roll, and thudded back. That seemed more effective.

Half an hour passed. But then we began to tilt again. Chris held his hand until we were on top-center of the supporting fin and then let the foreside laterals have it again. We dropped back. Then a kind of seesaw contest went on for awhile. He began to look a little worried, reflecting, I believe, my own expression.

"We've got a good fuel margin," he said. "All the same we won't be able to keep this up indefinitely."

However the same appeared to apply to whatever was doing the pushing. After a bit more back and forth it—or they—apparently decided to call it off for the night.

By daylight we saw that the night's work had been poorer from their point of view. Nevertheless the rocket now lay some thirty yards further in the direction of the canal.

Chris climbed into the space-suit on the bank. Before he closed the helmet he strapped on a belt hung with such weighty and portable objects as he could find and we fixed a spare air-bottle in place on his back.

It had been arranged that Peter should float above him and observe for as long as he was able while I watched from the bank. I would have liked a running commentary on Chris's discoveries but the built-in radio was not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

practicable for under-water use.

Chris closed the helmet and tested, then waved his hand to me and began to walk carefully into the water. Peter, lying face down on the mattress, paddled it out slowly with his hands. After little more than a dozen paces Chris's head disappeared beneath the surface. I sat down and lit a cigarette, watching Peter paddling gently out, pausing now and then and all the time looking steadily down into the water.

About an hour passed. I had got cold sitting there and was walking up and down the bank for exercise. Peter was a hundred and fifty yards or more away. I could see him cupping his hands round his eyes as he peered down.

Suddenly he jerked up his head, rocking the mattress violently. His voice came to me in a shout. A moment later there was a splash near him and Chris shot up, rising more than half out of the water. He struck out for the mattress at once. Peter was reaching out a hand to help him aboard.

Then out of the water close behind him something rose, dripping. I can't say what it was, a sort of grab perhaps—or a kind of claw. It moved too quickly. It swung over and fell upon Chris and Peter with a mighty splash . . .

When the spray dropped there was nothing there.

I stood frozen while the ripples spread out and came lapping to my feet. Then I fancy I ran back and forth along the water's edge, crazily wringing my hands. I can't be sure—I was half out of my mind.

You see, there was something worse than losing my friends, worse than horror of whatever dwelt in the canal. I was suddenly alone, utterly alone, alone as a man has never been alone before. And all at once I was terribly afraid—afraid of the unbroken silence all round me—deadly afraid of fear itself.

You know how fear can tread close on your heels when you are alone on a dark night? This was something worse than that. Far, far worse—and in full sunlight. I was a mote, a tiny speck of life, the only thing that moved on the face of all that dreadful land—the only human soul in millions of miles of Space.

I felt that I must burrow. I was a frightened shelless creature that must dig itself in somewhere and side. Agoraphobia they call that—it's so easy to pin a long name on what you have never felt.

There was only one place I could hide. How I forced myself along that journey back to the rocket I don't know. But once I was inside I slammed the port behind me and screwed it shut. I was shaking like a man with a fever. The sweat and tears ran down my face together. I don't understand it. I'm not a lot afraid of death—if I were I'd never have been there. I guess fear's a lot

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more frightening than death somehow . . .

By the time night fell I had recovered a bit. Safe in a hiding hole I had been able to calm off gradually. I even made myself eat. But sleep of course was out of the question. I sat there in the silence, straining my ears for some sound to tell me that the creatures from the canal were coming again. I didn't hear it but they came all right . . .

Sitting in Chris' seat I felt the ship begin to roll. I did my best to imitate the movements he had made, but my knowledge of the controls was picked up from watching him and I hadn't his touch. I wasn't clear what I was supposed to be doing and I made a mess of it. Once or twice, by luck, I did something which gave the creature—or creatures—outside reason to pause and I did jerk the ship around a bit. But mostly it was ineffective. And they kept right on moving the ship.

Then, remembering Chris's concern, I got into a panic at the thought of the good fuel I was wasting. It was a choice of evils but at least the thing outside was making pretty slow work of it. I made myself climb over to my berth and kept myself swinging there while the place continued to turn round me in jerks—*thud—thud—thud* . . .

The early light showed me that the night's stint had shifted me a full three hundred yards nearer the canal. Two more nights at that rate would see the *Uniac 5* pretty close to the water's edge. The choice was clear enough—either she and I went down into the canal together or I risked trying to take her off. Well, you could scarcely call that a choice—it was just a chance and a poor one, I thought.

It took all my resolution to get me outside again but I did it. And I had the luck to find an outcrop of rock to which I could hitch the raising gear and save myself the labor of driving an anchor. While the engine was bringing her up slowly I studied Chris's tables.

Take-off time there worked out just an hour or so after sunset. That was plain easy figuring—but I wasn't risking it. I put the time forward a couple of hours and worked out the allowances—not such plain figuring but well worth the trouble.

I had my heart in my mouth when I did start. But it turns out there's not a lot to shooting them off—any fool can do it with the tables, especially against Mars-gravity. It's bringing them down that takes skill—and I didn't have any . . .

Well, that's the way Jeremy told it to me. And when he had finished I said, "But these things in the canal—you must have some idea what they were like?"

"No," he said. "I never saw them."

That's just one of the questions

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a lot of people have asked him since then.

The prosecution, having obtained a ruling that a ship in Space beyond the limits of Earth's atmosphere should be considered a part of that territory wherein it was registered, has set out to prove that in fact Mars has not been reached. If this can be established, all claims to prizes will, of course, be conveniently invalidated.

For this purpose they have been calling a great deal of expert talent to the witness stand. Men with famous names have stood there to give scientific proof that Jeremy Chambet is lying. They have shown on scientific grounds that Mars cannot have a breathable atmosphere, that the *canali* are not canals, that whatever they are there cannot be any appreciable quantity of water in them.

Also that the chances against any form of life familiar to us—and certainly any intelligence of the human type—having ever developed there are so great as to make the whole idea sheer moonshine, that Jeremy cannot describe his creatures from the canals because there could not be any such. Nor could any form his imagination might create make their existence credible even to his own reason. That, in fact, every word of his story is a fabrication and a fraud.

Bitterest of all, they bring up against him his own scientifically deduced opinions of the conditions that must logically prevail on Mars written, some of them, years before the *Uniac 5* took off on its long journey.

Maybe the shade of Peter Quorridge is having a quiet laugh some place.

"But you yourself advanced this as scientific finding," they say to Jeremy.

"I know," he admits miserably. "But I was wrong."

"Colleagues of yours have checked the deductions and support them."

"I know," he says again. "But they are wrong."

"You deny the validity of scientific findings then?"

"I . . ." He raises his eyes. He gazes helplessly round the courtroom meeting the looks of men whose scientific integrity he has always revered, men of his own circle. He looks down at the floor. "I don't know—now," he murmurs.

And there he sits, looking a little more shrunken and gray each day as the logic of scientific conclusion piles up against him. A very bewildered man, for how can the findings of science be wrong?

And, you know, when he told his story to me I didn't feel that he was inventing any of it. So I can't believe they'll actually pillory him—at least, I hope not.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they twinkled like jewels

by . . . Philip José Farmer

Crane didn't get the nice man's name—until it was far too late to do anything at all about it.

JACK CRANE lay all morning in the vacant lot. Now and then he moved a little to quiet the protest of cramped muscles and stagnant blood, but most of the time he was as motionless as the heap of rags he resembled. Not once did he hear or see a Bohas agent, or, for that matter, anyone. The pre-dawn darkness had hidden his panting flight from the transie jungle, his dodging across back-yards while whistles shrilled and voices shouted, and his crawling on hands and knees down an alley into the high grass and bushes which fringed a hidden garden.

For a while his heart had knocked so loudly that he had been sure he would not be able to hear his pursuers if they did get close. It seemed inevitable that they would track him down. A buddy had told him that a new camp had just been built at a place only three hours drive away from the town. This meant that Bohas would be thick as hornets in the neighborhood. But no black uniforms had so far appeared. And then, lying there while the passionate and untiring sun mounted the sky, the bang-bang

It was only a year and a half ago that Phil Farmer, till then a totally unknown (editorially speaking at any rate) young man of Peoria, wrote himself a novel that won him instantaneous acclaim as perhaps the hottest new science fiction writer currently astir. Its title was "The Lovers" and since then he has gone right on proving himself a top-hand craftsman.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of his heart was replaced by a noiseless but painful movement in his stomach.

He munched a candy bar and two dried rolls which a housewife had given him the evening before. The tiger in his belly quit pacing back and forth; it crouched and licked its chops, but its tail was stuck up in his throat. Jack could feel the dry fur swabbing his pharynx and mouth. He suffered, but he was used to that. Night would come as surely as anything did. He'd get a drink then to quench his thirst.

Boredom began to sit on his eyelids. Just as he was about to accept some much needed sleep, he moved a leaf with an accidental jerk of his hand and uncovered a caterpillar. It was dark except for a row of yellow spots along the central line of some of its segments. As soon as it was exposed, it began slowly shimmying away. Before it had gone two feet, it was crossed by a moving shadow. Guiding the shadow was a black wasp with an orange ring around the abdomen. It closed the gap between itself and the worm with a swift, smooth movement and straddled the dark body.

Before the wasp could grasp the thick neck with its mandibles, the intended victim began rapidly rolling and unrolling and flinging itself from side to side. For a minute the delicate dancer above it could not succeed in clenching the neck. Its sharp jaws slid off the frenziedly jerking skin until the tiring creature paused for the chip of a second.

Seizing opportunity and larva at the same time, the wasp stood high on its legs and pulled the worm's front end from the ground, exposing the yellowed band of the underpart. The attacker's abdomen curved beneath its own body; the stinger jabbed between two segments of the prey's jointed length. Instantly, the writhing stilled. A shudder, and the caterpillar became as inert as if it were dead.

Jack had watched with an eye not completely clinical, feeling the sympathy of the hunted and the hounded for a fellow. His own struggles of the past few months had been as desperate, though not as hopeless, and . . .

He stopped thinking. His heart again took up the rib-thudding. Out of the corner of his left eye he had seen a shadow that fell across the garden. When he slowly turned his head to follow the stain upon the sun-splashed soil, he saw that it clung to a pair of shining black boots.

Jack did not say anything. What was the use? He put his hands against the weeds and pushed his body up. He looked into the silent mouth of a .38 automatic. It told him his running days were over. You didn't talk back to a mouth like that.

II

Jack was lucky. As one of the last to be herded into the truck,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which had been once used for hauling cattle, he had more room to breathe than most of the others. He faced the rear bars. The vehicle was heading into the sun. Its rays were not as hard on him as on some of those who were so jam-packed they could not turn to get the hot yellow splotch out of their eyes.

He looked through lowered lids at the youths on either side of him. For the last three days in the transie jungle, the one standing on his left had given signs of what was coming upon him, what had come upon so many of the transies. The muttering, the indifference to food, not hearing you when you talked to him. And now the shock of being caught in the raid had speeded up what everybody had foreseen. He was hardened, like a concrete statue, into a half-crouch. His arms were held in front of him like a praying mantis', and his hands clutched a bar. Not even the pressure of the crowd could break his posture.

The man on Jack's right murmured something, but the roaring of motor and clashing of gears shifting on a hill squashed his voice. He spoke louder:

"Cerea flexibilitas. Extreme catatonic state. The fate of all of us."

"You're nuts," said Jack. "Not me. I'm no schizo, and I'm not going to become one."

As there was no reply, Jack decided he had not moved his lips enough to be heard clearly. Lately, even when it was quiet, people seemed to have trouble making out what he was saying. It made him mildly angry.

He shouted. It did not matter if he were overheard. That any of the prisoners were agents of the Bureau of Health and Sanity didn't seem likely. Anyway, he didn't care. They wouldn't do anything to him they hadn't planned before this.

"Got any idea where we're going?"

"Sure. F.M.R.C. 3. Federal Male Rehabilitation Camp No. 3. I spent two weeks in the hills spying on it."

Jack looked the speaker over. Like all those in the truck, he wore a frayed shirt, a stained and torn coat, and greasy, dirty trousers. The black bristles on his face were long; the back of his neck was covered by thick curls. The brim of his dutsy hat was pulled down low. Beneath its shadow his eyes roamed from side to side with the same fear that Jack knew was in his own eyes.

Hunger and sleepless nights had knobbed his cheekbones and honed his chin to a sharp point. An almost visible air clung to him, a hot aura that seemed to result from veins full of lava and eyeballs spilling out a heat that could not be held within him. He had the face every transie had, the face of a man who was either burning with fever or who had seen a vision.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jack looked away to stare miserably at the dust boiling up behind the wheels, as if he could see projected against its yellow-brown screen his retreating past.

He spoke out of the side of his mouth. "What's happened to us? We should be happy and working at good jobs and sure about the future. We shouldn't be just bums, hobos, walkers of the streets, rod-hoppers, beggars, and thieves."

His friend shrugged and looked uneasily from the corners of his eyes. He was probably expecting the question they all asked sooner or later: *Why are* you *on the road?* They asked, but none replied with words that meant anything. They lied, and they didn't seem to take any pleasure in their lying. When they asked questions themselves, they knew they wouldn't get the truth. But something forced them to keep on trying anyway.

Jack's buddy evaded also. He said, "I read a magazine article by a Dr. Vespa, the head of the Bureau of Health and Sanity. He'd written the article just after the President created the Bureau. He viewed, quote, with alarm and apprehension, unquote, the fact that six percent of those between the ages of twelve and twenty-five were schizophrenics who needed institutionalizing. And he was, quote, appalled and horrified, unquote, that five percent of the nation were homeless unemployed and that three point seven percent of those were between the ages of fourteen and thirty. He said that if this schizophrenia kept on progressing, half the world would be in rehabilitation camps. But if that occurred, the sane half would go to pot. Back to the stone age. And the schizos would die."

He licked his lips as if he were tasting the figures and found them bitter.

"I was very interested by Vespa's reply to a mother who had written him," he went on. "Her daughter ended up in a Bohas camp for schizos, and her son had left his wonderful home and brilliant future to become a bum. She wanted to know why. Vespa took six long paragraphs to give six explanations, all equally valid and all advanced by equally distinguished sociologists. He himself favored the mass hysteria theory. But if you looked at his gobbledegook closely, you could reduce it to one phrase, *We don't know.*

"He did say this—though you won't like it—that the schizos and the transies were just two sides of the same coin. Both were infected with the same disease, whatever it was. And the transies usually ended up as schizos anyway. It just took them longer."

Gears shifted. The floor slanted. Jack was shoved hard against the rear boards by the weight of the other men. He didn't answer until the pressure had eased and his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ribs were free to work for more than mere survival.

He said, "You're way off, schizo. My hitting the road has nothing to do with those splitheads. Nothing, you understand? There's nothing foggy or dreamy about me. I wouldn't be here with you guys if I hadn't been so interested in a wasp catching a caterpillar that I never saw the Bohas sneaking up on me."

While Jack described the little tragedy, the other allowed an understanding smile to bend his lips. He seemed engrossed, however, and when Jack had finished, he said:

"That was probably an ammophila wasp. *Sphex urnaria* Klug. Lovely, but vicious, little she-demon. Injects the poison from her sting into the caterpillar's central nerve cord. That not only paralyzes but preserves it. The victim is always stowed away with another one in an underground burrow. The wasp attaches one of her eggs to the body of a worm. When the egg hatches, the grub eats both of the worms. They're alive, but they're completely helpless to resist while their guts are gnawed away. Beautiful idea, isn't it?

"It's a habit common to many of those little devils: *Sceliphron cementarium, Eumenes coarcta, Eumenes fraterna, Bembix spinolae, Pelopoeus . . .*"

Jack's interest wandered. His informant was evidently one of those transies who spent long hours in the libraries. They were ready at the slightest chance to offer their encyclopaedic but often useless knowledge. Jack himself had abandoned his childhood bookwormishness. For the last three years his days and evenings had worn themselves out on the streets, passed in a parade of faces, flickered by in plateglass windows of restaurants and department stores and business offices, while he hoped, hoped. . . .

"Did you say you spied on the camp?" Jack interrupted the sonorous, almost chanting flow of Greek and Latin.

"Huh? Oh, yeah. For two weeks. I saw plenty of transies trucked in, but I never saw any taken out. Maybe they left in the rocket."

"Rocket?"

The youth was looking straight before him. His face was hard as bone, but his voice trembled.

"Yes. A big one. It landed and discharged about a dozen men."

"You nuts? There's been only one man-carrying rocket invented, and it lands by parachute."

"I saw it, I tell you. And I'm not so nutty I'm seeing things that aren't there. Not yet, anyway!"

"Maybe the government's got rockets it's not telling anybody about."

"Then what connection could there be between rehabilitation camps and rockets?"

Jack shrugged and said, "Your rocket story is fantastic."

"If somebody had told you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

four years ago that you'd be a bum hauled off to a concentration camp, you'd have said that was fantastic too."

Jack did not have time to reply. The truck stopped outside a high, barbed wire fence. The gate swung open; the truck bounced down the bumpy dirt road. Jack saw some black-uniformed Bohas seated by heavy machine guns. They halted at another entrance; more barbed wire was passed. Huge Dobermann-Pinchers looked at the transies with cold, steady eyes. The dust of another section of road swirled up before they squeaked to a standstill and the engine turned off.

This time, agents began to let down the back of the truck. They had to pry the pitiful schizo's fingers loose from the wood with a crow-bar and carry him off, still in his half-crouch.

A sergeant boomed orders. Stiff and stumbling, the transies jumped off the truck. They were swiftly lined up into squads and marched into the enclosure and from there into a huge black barracks. Within an hour each man was stripped, had his head shaven, was showered, given a grey uniform, and handed a tin plate and spoon and cup filled with beans and bread and hot coffee.

Afterwards, Jack wandered around, free to look at the sandy soil underfoot and barbed wire and the black uniforms of the sentries, and free to ask himself where, where, wherewherewhere? Twelve years ago it had been, but where, where, where, was . . . ?

III

How easy it would have been to miss all this, if only he had obeyed his father. But Mr. Crane was so ineffectual. . . .

"Jackie," he had said, "would you please go outside and play, or stay in some other room. It's very difficult to discuss business while you're whooping and screaming around, and I have a lot to discuss with Mr.—"

"Yes, Daddy," Jack said before his father mentioned his visitor's name. But he was not Jack Crane in his game; he was Uncas. The big chairs and the divan were trees in his imaginative eyes. The huge easy chair in which Daddy's caller (Jack thought of him only as "Mister") sat was a fallen log. He, Uncas, meant to hide behind it in ambush.

Mister did not bother him. He had smiled and said in a shrill voice that he thought Jack was a very nice boy. He wore a light grey-green Palm Beach suit and carried a big brown leather briefcase that looked too heavy for his soda straw-thin legs and arms. He was queer looking because his waist was so narrow and his back so humped. And when he took off his tan Panama hat, a white fuzz exploded from his scalp. His face was pale as the moon in daylight. His broad smile showed teeth that Jack knew were false.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But the queerest thing about him was his thick spectacles, so heavily tinted with rose that Jack could not see the eyes behind them. The afternoon light seemed to bounce off the lenses in such a manner that no matter what angle you looked at them, you could not pierce them. And they curved to hide the sides of his eyes completely.

Mister had explained that he was an albino, and he needed the glasses to dim the glare on his eyes. Jack stopped being Uncas for a minute to listen. He had never seen an albino before, and, indeed, he did not know what one was.

"I don't mind the youngster," said Mister. "Let him play here if he wants to. He's developing his imagination, and he may be finding more stimuli in this front room than he could in all of outdoors. We should never cripple the fine gift of imagination in the young. Imagination, fancy, fantasy—or whatever you call it—is the essence and mainspring of those scientists, musicians, painters, and poets who amount to something in later life. They are adults who have remained youths."

Mister addressed Jack, "You're the Last of the Mohicans, and you're about to sneak up on the French captain and tomahawk him, aren't you?"

Jack blinked. He nodded his head. The opaque rose lenses set in Mister's face seemed to open a door into his naked grey skull.

The man said, "I want you to listen to me, Jack. You'll forget my name, which isn't important. But you will always remember me and my visit, won't you?"

Jack stared at the impenetrable lenses and nodded dumbly.

Mister turned to Jack's father. "Let his fancy grow. It is a necessary wish-fulfillment play. Like all human young who are good for anything at all, he is trying to find the lost door to the Garden of Eden. The history of the great poets and men-of-action is the history of the attempt to return to the realm that Adam lost, the forgotten Hesperides of the mind, the Avalon buried in our soul."

Mr. Crane put his fingertips together. "Yes?"

"Personally, I think that some day man will realize just what he is searching for and will invent a machine that will enable the child to project, just as a film throws an image on a screen, the visions in his psyche.

"I see you're interested," he continued. "You would be, naturally, since you're a professor of philosophy. Now, let's call the toy a specterscope, because through it the subject sees the spectres that haunt his unconscious. Ha! Ha! But how does it work? If you'll keep it to yourself, Mr. Crane, I'll tell you something: My native country's scientists have developed a rather simple device, though they haven't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

published anything about it in the scientific journals. Let me give you a brief explanation: Light strikes the retina of the eye; the rods and cones pass on impulses to the bipolar cells, which send them on to the optic nerve, which goes to the brain . . ."

"Elementary and full of gaps," said Jack's father.

"Pardon me," said Mister. "A bare outline should be enough. You'll be able to fill in the details. Very well. This specterscope breaks up the light going into the eye in such a manner that the rods and cones receive only a certain wavelength. I can't tell you what it is, except that it's in the visual red. The scope also concentrates like a burning-glass and magnifies the power of the light.

"Result? A hitherto-undiscovered chemical in the visual purple of the rods is activated and stimulates the optic nerve in a way we had not guessed possible. An electrochemical stimulus then irritates the subconscious until it fully wakes up.

"Let me put it this way. The subconscious is not a matter of location but of organization. There are billions of possible connections between the neurons of the cortex. Look at those potentialities as so many cards in the same pack. Shuffle the cards one way and you have the common workaday *cogito, ergo sum* mind. Reshuffle them, and, bingo! you have the combination of neurons, or cards, of the unconscious. The specterscope does the redealing. When the subject gazes through it, he sees for the first time the full impact and result of his underground mind's workings in other perceptics than dreams or symbolical behavior. The subjective Garden of Eden is resurrected. It is my contention that this specterscope will some day be available to all children.

"When that happens, Mr. Crane, you will understand that the world will profit from man's secret wishes. Earth will be a far better place. Paradise, sunken deep in every man, can be dredged out and set up again."

"I don't know," said Jack's father, stroking his chin thoughtfully with a finger. "Children like my son are too introverted as it is. Give them this psychological toy you suggest, and you would watch them grow, not into the outside world, but into themselves. They would fester. Man has been expelled from the Garden. His history is a long, painful climb toward something different. It is something that is probably better than the soft and flabby Golden Age. If man were to return, he would regress, become worse than static, become infantile or even embryonic. He would be smothered in the folds of his own dreams."

"Perhaps," said the salesman. "But I think you have a very unusual child here. He will go much farther than you may think. Why?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Because he is sensitive and has an imagination that only needs the proper guidance. Too many children become mere bourgeois ciphers with paunches and round "O" minds full of tripe. They'll stay on earth. That is, I mean they'll be stuck in the mud."

"You talk like no insurance salesman I've ever met."

"Like all those who really want to sell, I'm a born psychologist," Mister shrilled. "Actually, I have an advantage. I have a Ph.D. in psychology. I would prefer staying at home for laboratory work, but since I can help my starving children—I am not joking—so much more by coming to a foreign land and working at something that will put food in their mouths, I do it. I can't stand to see my little ones go hungry. Moreover," he said with a wave of his long-fingered hand, "this whole planet is really a lab that beats anything within four walls."

"You spoke of famine. Your accent—your name. You're a Greek, aren't you?"

"In a way," said Mister. "My name, translated, means gracious or kindly or well-meaning." His voice became brisker. "The translation is apropos. I'm here to do you a service. Now, about these monthly premiums . . ."

Jack shook himself and stepped out of the mold of fascination that Mister's glasses seemed to have poured around him. Uncas again, he crawled on all fours from chair to divan to stool to the fallen log which the adults thought was an easy chair. He stuck his head from behind it and sighted along the broomstick-musket at his father. He'd shoot that white man dead and then take his scalp. He giggled at that, because his father really didn't have any hairlock to take.

At that moment Mister decided to take off his specs and polish them with his breastpocket handkerchief. While he answered one of Mr. Crane's questions, he let them dangle from his fingers. Accidentally, the lenses were level with Jack's gaze. One careless glance was enough to jerk his eyes back to them. One glance stunned him so that he could not at once understand that what he was seeing was not reality.

There was his father across the room. But it wasn't a room. It was a space outdoors under the low branch of a tree whose trunk was so big it was as wide as the wall had been. Nor was the Persian rug there. It was replaced by a close-cropped bright green grass. Here and there foot-high flowers with bright yellow petals tipped in scarlet swayed beneath an internal wind. Close to Mr. Crane's feet a white horse no larger than a fox terrier bit off the flaming end of a plant.

All those things were wonderful enough—but was that naked giant who sprawled upon a moss-covered boulder father? No! Yes! Though the features were no longer pinched and scored and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pale, though they were glowing and tanned and smooth like a young athlete's they were his father's! Even the thick, curly hair that fell down over a wide forehead and the panther-muscled body could not hide his identity.

Though it tore at his nerves, and though he was afraid that once he looked away he would never again seize the vision, Jack ripped his gaze away from the rosy view.

The descent to the grey and rasping reality was so painful that tears ran down his cheeks, and he gasped as if struck in the pit of the stomach. How could beauty like that be all around him without his knowing it?

He felt that he had been blind all his life until this moment and would be forever eyeless again, an unbearable forever, if he did not look through the glass again.

He stole another hurried glance, and the pain in his heart and stomach went away, his insides became wrapped in a soft wind. He was lifted. He was floating, a pale red, velvety air caressed him and buoyed him.

He saw his mother run from around the tree. That should have seemed peculiar, because he had thought she was dead. But there she was, no longer flat-walking and coughing and thin and wax-skinned, but golden-brown and curvy and bouncy. She jumped at Daddy and gave him a long kiss. Daddy didn't seem to mind that she had no clothes on. Oh, it was so wonderful. Jack was drifting on a yielding and wine-tinted air and warmed with a wind that seemed to swell him out like a happy balloon. . . .

Suddenly he was falling, hurtling helplessly and sickeningly through a void while a cold and drab blast gouged his skin and spun him around and around. The world he had always known shoved hard against him. Again he felt the blow in the solar plexus and saw the grey tentacles of the living reality reach for his heart.

Jack looked up at the stranger, who was just about to put his spectacles on the bridge of his long nose. His eyelids were closed. Jack never did see the pink eyes.

That didn't bother him. He had other things to think about. He crouched beside the chair while his brain tried to move again, tried to engulf a thought and failed because it could not become fluid enough to find the idea that would move his tongue to shriek, *No! No! No!*

And when the salesman rose and placed his papers in his case and patted Jack on the head and bent his opaque rose spectacles at him and said good-by and that he wouldn't be coming back because he was going out of town to stay, Jack was not able to move or say a thing. Nor for a long time after the door had closed could he break through the mass that gripped him like hardened lava. By then, no amount of screams and weeping would bring Mister

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

back. All his father could do was to call a doctor who took the boy's temperature and gave him some pills.

IV

Jack stood inside the wire and bent his neck back to watch a huge black and silver oyster feel the dusk for a landing-field with its single white foot and its orange toes. Blindingly, lights sprang to attention over the camp.

When Jack had blinked his eyes back to normal, he could see over the flat half-mile between the fence and the ship. It lay quiet and glittering and smoking in the flood-beams. He could see the round door in its side swing open. Men began filing out. A truck rumbled across the plain and pulled up beside the metal bulk. A very tall man stepped out of the cab and halted upon the running board, from which he seemed to be greeting the newcomers or giving them instructions. Whatever he was saying took so long that Jack lost interest.

Lately, he had not been able to focus his mind for any length of time upon anything except that one event in the past. He wandered around and whipped glances at his comrades' faces, noting listlessly that their uniforms and shaved heads had improved their appearance. But nothing would be able to chill the feverishness of their eyes.

Whistles shrilled. Jack jumped. His heart beat faster. He felt as if the end of the quest were suddenly close. Somebody would be around the corner. In a minute that person would be facing him, and then . . .

Then, he reflected, and sagged with a wave of disappointment at the thought, then there was nobody around the corner. It always happened that way. Besides, there weren't any corners in this camp. He had reached the wall at the end of the alley. Why didn't he stop looking?

Sergeants lined the prisoners up four abreast preparatory to marching them into the barracks. Jack supposed it was time to turn in for the night. He submitted to their barked orders and hard hands without resentment. They seemed a long way off. For the ten thousandth time he was thinking that this need not have happened.

If he had been man enough to grapple with himself, to wrestle as Jacob did with the angel and not let loose until he had felled the problem, he could be teaching philosophy in a quiet little college, as his father did. He had graduated from high school with only average marks, and then, instead of going to college, as his father had so much wanted him to, he had decided he would work a year. With his earnings, he would see the world.

He had seen it, but when his money ran out he had not returned home. He had drifted,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

taking jobs here and there, sleeping in flop-houses, jungles, park benches, and freight cars.

When the newly created Bureau of Health and Sanity had frozen jobs in an effort to solve the transiency problem, Jack had refused to work. He knew that he would not be able to quit a job without being arrested at once. Like hundreds of thousands of other youths, he had begged and stolen and hidden from the local police and the Bohas.

Even through all those years of misery and wandering, he had not once admitted to himself the true nature of this fog-cottoned grail. He knew it, and he did not know it. It was patroling the edge of his mind, circling a faroff periphery, recognizable by a crude silhouette but nameless. Any time he wanted to, he could have summoned it closer and said, *You are it, and I know you, and I know what I am looking for. It is . . . ? Is what? Worthless? Foolish? Insane? A dream?*

Jack had never had the courage to take that action. When it seemed the thing was galloping closer, charging down upon him, he ran away. It must stay on the horizon, moving on, always moving, staying out of his grasp.

"All you guys, for'ard 'arch!"

Jack did not move. The truck from the rocket had come through a gate and stopped by the transies, and about fifty men were getting off the back.

The man behind Jack bumped into him. Jack paid him no attention. He did not move. He squinted at the group who had come from the rocket. They were very tall, hump-shouldered, and dressed in light grey-green Palm Beach suits and tan Panama hats. Each held a brown leather briefcase at the end of a long, thin arm. Each wore on the bridge of his long nose a pair of rose-colored glasses.

A cry broke hoarsely from the transies. Some of those in front of Jack fell to their knees as if a sudden poison had paralyzed their legs. They called names and stretched out open hands. A boy by Jack's side sprawled face-down on the sand while he uttered over and over again, "Mr. Pelopoeus! Mr. Pelopoeus!"

The name meant nothing to Jack. He did feel repulsed at seeing the fellow turn on his side, bend his neck forward, bring his clenched fists up against his chest, and jackknife his legs against his arms. He had seen it many times before in the transie jungles, but he had never gotten over the sickness it had first caused him.

He turned away and came almost nose to nose with one of the men from the rocket. He had put down his briefcase so it rested against his leg and taken a white handkerchief out of his breast pocket to wipe the dust from his lenses. His lids were squeezed shut as if he found the lights unbearable.

Jack stared and could not move

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

while a name that the boy behind him had been crying out slowly worked its way through his consciousness. Suddenly, like the roar of a flashflood that is just rounding the bend of a dry gulch, the syllables struck him. He lunged forward and clutched at the spectacles in the man's hand. At the same time he yelled over and over the words that had filled out the blank in his memory.

"Mr. Eumenes! Mr. Eumenes!"

A sergeant cursed and slammed his fist into Jack's face. Jack fell down, flat on his back. Though his jaw felt as if it were torn loose from its hinge, he rolled over on his side, raised himself on his hands and knees, and began to get up to his feet.

"Stand still!" bellowed the sergeant. "Stay in formation or you'll get more of the same!"

Jack shook his head until it cleared. He crouched and held out his hands toward the man, but he did not move his feet. Over and over, half-chanting, half-crooning, he said, "Mr. Eumenes! The glasses! Please, Mr. Eumenes, the glasses!"

The forty-nine Mr. Eumenae-and-otherwise looked incuriously with impenetrable rosy eyes. The fiftieth put the white handkerchief back in his pocket. His mouth opened. False teeth gleamed. With his free hand he took off his hat and waved it at the crowd and bowed.

His tilted head showed a white fuzzlike hair that shot up over his pale scalp. His gestures were both comic and terrifying. The hat and the inclination of his body said far more than words could. They said, *Good-by forever, and bon voyage!*

Then Mr. Eumenes straightened up and opened his lids.

At first, the sockets looked as if they held no eyeballs, as if they were empty of all but shadows.

Jack saw them from a distance. Mr. Eumenes-or-his-twin was shooting away faster and faster and becoming smaller and smaller. No! He himself was. He was rocketing away within his own body. He was falling down a deep well.

He, Jack Crane, was a hollow shaft down which he slipped and screamed, away, away, from the world outside. It was like seeing from the wrong end of a pair of binoculars that lengthened and lengthened while the man with the long-sought-for treasure in his hand flew in the opposite direction as if he had been connected to the horizon by a rubber band and somebody had released it and he was flying towards it, away from Jack.

Even as this happened, as he knew vaguely that his muscles were locking into the posture of a beggar, hands out, pleading, face twisted into an agony of asking, lips repeating his croon-chant, he saw what had occurred.

The realization was like the sudden, blinding, and at the same time clarifying light that some-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

times comes to epileptics just as they are going into a seizure. It was the thought that he had kept away on the horizon of his mind, the thought that now charged in on him with long leaps and bounds and then stopped and sat on its haunches and grinned at him while its long tongue lolled.

Of course, he should have known all these years what it was. He should have known that Mr. Eumenes was the worst thing in the world for him. He had known it, but, like a drug addict, he had refused to admit it. He had searched for the man. Yet he had known it would be fatal to find him. The rose-colored spectacles would swing gates that should never be fully open. And he should have guessed *what* and *who* Mr. Eumenes was when that encyclopedic fellow in the truck had singsonged those names.

How could he have been so stupid? Stupid? Is was easy! He had *wanted* to be stupid! And how could the Mr. Eumenes-or-otherwise have used such obvious giveaway names? It was a measure of their contempt for the humans around them and of their own grim wit. Look at all the double entendres the salesman had given his father, and his father had never suspected. Even the head of the Bureau of Health and Sanity had been terrifyingly blasé about it.

Dr. Vespa. He had thrown his name like a gauntlet to humanity, and humanity had stared idiotically at it and never guessed its meaning. Vespa was a good Italian name. Jack didn't know what it meant, but he supposed that it had the same meaning as the Latin. He remembered it from his high school class.

As for his not encountering the salesman until now, he had been lucky. If he had run across him during his search, he would have been denied the glasses, as now. And the shock would have made him unable to cry out and betray the man. He would have done what he was so helplessly doing at this moment, and he would have been carted off to an institution.

How many other transies had seen that unforgettable face on the streets, the end of their search, and gone at once into that state that made them legal prey of the Bohas?

That was almost his last rational thought. He could no longer feel his flesh. A thin red curtain was falling between him and his senses. Everywhere it billowed out beneath him and eased his fall. Everywhere it swirled and softened the outlines of things that were streaking by—a large tree that he remembered seeing in his living room, a naked giant, his father, leaning against it and eating an apple, and a delicate little white creature cropping flowers.

Yet all this while he lived in two worlds. One was the passage downwards towards the Garden

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Eden. The other was that hemisphere in which he had dwelt so reluctantly, the one he now perceived through the thickening red veil of his sight and other senses.

They were not yet gone. He could feel the hands of the black-clad officers lifting him up and laying him upon some hard substance that rocked and dumped. Every lurch and thud was only dimly felt. Then he was placed upon something softer and carried into what he vaguely sensed was the interior of one of the barracks.

Some time later—he didn't know or care when, for he had lost all conception or even definition of time—he looked up the deep everlengthening shaft of himself into the eyes of another Mr. Eumenes or Mr. Sphex or Dr. Vespa or whatever he called himself. He was in white and wore a stethoscope around his neck.

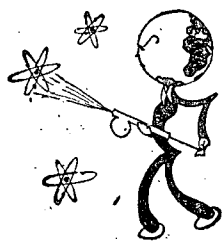
Beside him stood another of his own kind. This one wore lipstick and a nurse's cap. She carried a tray on which were several containers. One container held a large and sharp scalpel. The other held an egg. It was about twice the size of a hen's egg.

Jack saw all this just before the veil took on another shade of red and blurred completely his vision of the outside. But the final thickening did not keep him from seeing that Doctor Eumenes was staring down at him as if he were peering into a dusky burrow. And Jack could make out the eyes. They were large, much larger than they should have been at the speed with which Jack was receding. They were not the pale pink of an albino's. They were black from corner to corner and built of a dozen or so hexagons whose edges caught the light.

They twinkled.

Like jewels.

Or the eyes of an enormous and evolved wasp.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the gambling ghost

by . . . Dal Stivens

Frying-pan Fred met a ghost who was lucky at cards—but when Fred got into the game himself, he discovered that he could never stop.

FRYING-PAN FRED was returning to his hut in the Australian bush one night after a booze-up when he met a ghost. The ghost was sitting on a fencing post by the side of the track and making signs with his forefinger for Frying-pan to come closer. The ghost was silvery white but otherwise he was dressed much the same as Frying-pan, with moleskin trousers, flannel shirt, and blucher boots. In life the ghost had been about fifty; he had a long narrow face and a ragged moustache that looked as though it had been chewed in a mouse plague. The ghost kept on crooking his forefinger.

"What do you want?" asks Frying-pan.

"You," says the ghost.

"Not on your life," says Frying-pan and, clutching the five bottles of nelly's death he was carrying, took to his heels, dived into the scrub, and reached his hut safely. He felt a bit crook, emptied one of the bottles of plonk, and went to bed.

The next evening when Frying-pan was going home he saw the ghost sitting on the same post and beckoning again with his forefinger.

"You're a persistent coot but

Ghost stories have excited man's imagination since the beginning of time—sometimes chilling, sometimes thrilling, sometimes humorous. But we'll bet you've never before come across a story where the ghosts were considerate.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you're not getting me," says Frying-pan, and he took to his heels once more. When he reached his hut he was surprised to see the ghost sitting on the bark roof and beckoning with his forefinger.

"You're worse than persistent, ghost," says Frying-pan. "You're plain pig-headed. I'll be obliged if you'll clear out back to your post and let a man get a bit of sleep."

"Not on your life," says the ghost. "I want to have a word with you."

"All right," says Frying-pan. "But make it short; I'm a bit tired from running home."

"As you say," says the ghost. "Lend me ten bob."

"Strike me roan!" says Frying-pan. "Who ever heard of a ghost wanting dough!"

"We've got a poker school back in the scrub and I'm broke," says the ghost.

Frying-pan looked at the ghostly buttons on the ghost's shirt, the ghostly laces on his boots, at the ghostly pipe he was filling with ghostly tobacco.

"Haven't you got any ghost money?" he asks.

"Yes," says the ghost, nodding his head, "but the others won't accept it."

Frying-pan thought it over and in the end he gave the ghost ten bob and then as an afterthought he added another ten bob.

"Play that for me," he says.

The ghost took the sugar and scooted off into the scrub. The next night when Frying-pan was going home he looked for the ghost but the fencing post was empty. When he got home he found the ghost sitting in his chair by the fire.

"You brought me luck," says the ghost. "And you didn't do too badly yourself."

He got out of the chair, took out a silvery notebook, counted out fifty quid in real money, and handed it to Frying-pan.

Frying-pan had hardly swallowed his surprise before the ghost had mumbled "so long" and mizzled off into the bush. Frying-pan yelled after him to play another five quid for him but the ghost didn't answer.

Frying-pan didn't see anything of the ghost for a week, and then he found him one night sitting in his chair and boiling the billy on the fire.

"The stuff we have is crook," says the ghost by way of apology. "Lend me a fiver. We've got a race meeting on."

Frying-pan lent him the fiver and asked him to put on another fiver for himself. The next night the ghost was waiting for Frying-pan and baking a damper and boiling a billy on the fire. He got up from Frying-pan's chair, pulled out a notebook, and counted a hundred quid into Frying-pan's hands.

"You brought me luck again and didn't do so bad yourself," he says and faded off into the scrub before Frying-pan could get

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

over his surprise and ask him to put on another tenner for him.

There wasn't a smell of the ghost for a week, and then one night when Frying-pan came back to the hut there was the spook having a snore in Frying-pan's bed and on the fireplace were the remains of a damper he had baked and the dregs of some tea he had brewed.

"The bunks we have are crook," says the ghost. "Lend me twenty quid. I'm dead broke and we're holding a two-up school."

Frying-pan lent the shade the twenty and gave him another to play for him.

"What about me coming along to your game?" says Frying-pan.

"I'll have to talk it over with the blokes," says the ghost with a grin, and he sloped off into the scrub.

The next night when Frying-pan got back to his hut the ghost was snoring away in the bunk and on the table was the remains of a damper he had baked, the dregs of some tea he had brewed, and the stump of a plug of Frying-pan's tobacco he had helped himself to. Frying-pan had to shout several times before the ghost woke up, got to his feet and pulled out his notebook.

"You brought me luck and you didn't do so bad yourself," he says, and counted out two hundred quid and put it into Frying-pan's hands. He faded off into the mallee before Frying-pan could get the words out to ask him to play another fifty for him.

Frying-pan saw nothing of the ghost for a week, and then one night when he came back to the hut he found the ghost snoring in his bunk and on the table was the remains of the damper he had baked, the dregs of the tea he had brewed, the stump of a tobacco plug he'd helped himself to, and an empty bottle of nelly's death.

Frying-pan had to shout for several minutes and even try to shake the spook (though his hand went right through him) before he woke him up.

"Lend me a hundred quid," says the ghost. "We've got another poker school going."

Frying-pan lent him the dough and gave him another hundred to play for him.

"What about me coming along to your game?" he says to the spook.

"I'll sound the blokes again," says the ghost and mooched off into the bush.

The next night when Frying-pan reached his hut the ghost was snoring in the bunk and on the table were the remains of the damper, the tea, the plug of tobacco, and three empty bottles of nelly's death.

It took Frying-pan ten minutes to rouse the ghost and then he swayed on his feet and sat down on the bunk.

"You brought me luck but your own was out, Frying-pan," says the ghost in an apologetic voice.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I ought to have stopped when your hundred was gone but I reckoned I'd get it back."

The ghost waved his arms, overbalanced, and fell back on the bunk. "The truth, Frying-pan, is that you owe the coves six hundred quid. I'm awfully sorry, but there it is."

"Ghost," says Frying-pan "you've given me a raw deal."

"You're right," says the ghost, "but the harm's done. You'll have to square off with the boys. How much sugar have you got?"

Frying-pan complained for some minutes about what the ghost had done. When he cooled down he counted his gilt which amounted to nearly two hundred quid and set off with the ghost through the mallee. After about five minutes they came on a mob of blokes in a clearing playing two-up. They stopped when they saw Frying-pan and gathered round him.

There were about twenty of them and they wore the sort of clobber they had when alive (blucher boots and elastic sides, dungarees and moleskins, flannel shirts and waistcoats), only now it was silvery grey like moonlight.

"Some of the mob reckoned you must have welshed," says one of the ghosts to Frying-pan. This ghost had a beard down to his watch chain.

"I've never welshed in my life," says Frying-pan, "and I ain't starting now with a bunch of spooks. Here's two hundred quid. Give me a week or so to dig up the rest."

The ghosts went off, barneyed for a bit, and then came back to say they accepted the offer.

"Now that little matter's settled," says Frying-pan, "we'll have some two-up." He turned to the ghost he'd loaned his coin to in the past. "Lend me ten bob," says Frying-pan.

Frying-pan was in luck and at the end of the game he'd won back a hundred quid. At dawn the ghosts all cleared out, leaving Frying-pan alone.

At the end of the game four nights later Frying-pan was clear and paid his debt. At dawn he found that he too vanished with the ghosts.

Frying-pan was a bit upset when he realized this and he fumed all day until the sun set and he found himself back in the clearing with the ghosts.

"First you do in my dough," says Frying-pan, starting in when he saw the first ghost with the chewed moustache, "and then you or your mates ball things up and get me shut up in a box all day."

"I reckon it might look that way to you, Frying-pan," cuts in the ghost with the big beaver down to his watch chain.

"Might?" says Frying-pan. "I couldn't see a dang thing all day."

"Frying-pan," says the ghost with the beaver. "Reckon you can be told now. You pegged out soon after leaving that sly-grog shanty and the blokes have been

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trying to break it tactful-like to you."

"Much obliged to you coves," says Frying-pan as soon as he has got over his surprise at finding himself dead. "Much obliged to you, mates."

He was about to say something more when he saw the ghost with the ragged moustache beckoning him with his forefinger. Frying-pan walked across to him, digging in his pocket.

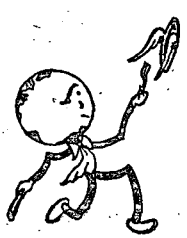
"I'm broke but keep your dough," says the ghost. "There's a new cove to be broken in and I'll bite him. What's more, he's got a hut full of grog. You'd better come along and give me a hand."

"All right," says Frying-pan.

"There's something else I wanted to tip you off about, Frying-pan," says the ghost with the mangled moustache, "but it's slipped my mind—"

Frying-pan was looking down at the toes of his bluchers and he saw them suddenly turning silvery white. The moonlighty color began to creep up the legs of his dungarees, and just in time Frying-pan dragged his roll out of his hip pocket and tossed it on the ground.

"That was it," says the other ghost. "You can pick it up now. Money is the only thing that never changes."



One of many stellar attractions lined up for our next issue is a short novel by a new author—a doctor who has exchanged his stethoscope for a typewriter. In THE LOVE MACHINE *Dr. Brown tells an amazing story of a terrific hemispheric war, and the way history is drastically altered because a young lieutenant falls in love. After reading this yarn we know you will add Jim Brown's name to your list of favorite authors.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

beyond the door

by . . . Philip K. Dick

Larry Thomas bought a cuckoo clock for his wife—without knowing the price he would have to pay.

THAT NIGHT at the dinner table he brought it out and set it down beside her plate. Doris stared at it, her hand to her mouth. "My God, what is it?" She looked up at him, bright-eyed.

"Well, open it."

Doris tore the ribbon and paper from the square package with her sharp nails, her bosom rising and falling. Larry stood watching her as she lifted the lid. He lit a cigarette and leaned against the wall.

"A cuckoo clock!" Doris cried. "A real old cuckoo clock like my mother had." She turned the clock over and over. "Just like my mother had, when Pete was still alive." Her eyes sparkled with tears.

"It's made in Germany," Larry said. After a moment he added, "Carl got it for me wholesale. He knows some guy in the clock business. Otherwise I wouldn't have —" He stopped.

Doris made a funny little sound.

"I mean, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to afford it." He scowled. "What's the matter with you? You've got your clock, haven't you? Isn't that what you want?"

Doris sat holding onto the

Did you ever wonder at the lonely life the bird in a cuckoo clock has to lead—that it might possibly love and hate just as easily as a real animal of flesh and blood? Philip Dick used that idea for this brief fantasy tale. We're sure that after reading it you'll give cuckoo clocks more respect.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clock, her fingers pressed against the brown wood.

"Well," Larry said, "what's the matter?"

He watched in amazement as she leaped up and ran from the room, still clutching the clock. He shook his head. "Never satisfied. They're all that way. Never get enough."

He sat down at the table and finished his meal.

The cuckoo clock was not very large. It was hand-made, however, and there were countless frets on it, little indentations and ornaments scored in the soft wood. Doris sat on the bed drying her eyes and winding the clock. She set the hands by her wristwatch. Presently she carefully moved the hands to two minutes of ten. She carried the clock over to the dresser and propped it up.

Then she sat waiting, her hands twisted together in her lap—waiting for the cuckoo to come out, for the hour to strike.

As she sat she thought about Larry and what he had said. And what she had said, too, for that matter—not that she could be blamed for any of it. After all, she couldn't keep listening to him forever without defending herself; you had to blow your own trumpet in the world.

She touched her handkerchief to her eyes suddenly. Why did he have to say that, about getting it wholesale? Why did he have to spoil it all? If he felt that way he nedn't have got it in the first place. She clenched her fists. He was so mean, so damn mean.

But she was glad of the little clock sitting there ticking to itself, with its funny grilled edges and the door. Inside the door was the cuckoo, waiting to come out. Was he listening, his head cocked on one side, listening to hear the clock strike so that he would know to come out?

Did he sleep between hours? Well, she would soon see him: she could ask him. And she would show the clock to Bob. He would love it; Bob loved old things, even old stamps and buttons. He liked to go with her to the stores. Of course, it was a little *awkward,* but Larry had been staying at the office so much, and that helped. If only Larry didn't call up sometimes to—

There was a whirr. The clock shuddered and all at once the door opened. The cuckoo came out, sliding swiftly. He paused and looked around solemnly, scrutinizing her, the room, the furniture.

It was the first time he had seen her, she realized, smiling to herself in pleasure. She stood up, coming toward him shyly. "Go on," she said. "I'm waiting."

The cuckoo opened his bill. He whirred and chirped, quickly, rhythmically. Then, after a moment of contemplation, he retired. And the door snapped shut.

She was delighted. She clapped her hands and spun in a little circle. He was marvelous, perfect!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And the way he had looked around, studying her, sizing her up. He liked her; she was certain of it. And she, of course, loved him at once, completely. He was just what she had hoped would come out of the little door.

Doris went to the clock. She bent over the little door, her lips close to the wood. "Do you hear me?" she whispered. "I think you're the most wonderful cuckoo in the world." She paused, embarrassed. "I hope you'll like it here."

Then she went downstairs again, slowly, her head high.

Larry and the cuckoo clock really never got along well from the start. Doris said it was because he didn't wind it right, and it didn't like being only half-wound all the time. Larry turned the job of winding over to her; the cuckoo came out every quarter hour and ran the spring down without remorse, and someone had to be ever after it, winding it up again.

Doris did her best, but she forgot a good deal of the time. Then Larry would throw his newspaper down with an elaborate weary motion and stand up. He would go into the dining-room where the clock was mounted on the wall over the fireplace. He would take the clock down and making sure that he had his thumb over the little door, he would wind it up.

"Why do you put your thumb over the door?" Doris asked once.

"You're supposed to."

She raised an eyebrow. "Are you sure? I wonder if it isn't that you don't want him to come out while you're standing so close."

"Why not?"

"Maybe you're afraid of him."

Larry laughed. He put the clock back on the wall and gingerly removed his thumb. When Doris wasn't looking he examined his thumb.

There was still a trace of the nick cut out of the soft part of it. Who—or what—had pecked at him?

One Saturday morning, when Larry was down at the office working over some important special accounts, Bob Chambers came to the front porch and rang the bell.

Doris was taking a quick shower. She dried herself and slipped into her robe. When she opened the door Bob stepped inside, grinning.

"Hi," he said, looking around.

"It's all right. Larry's at the office."

"Fine." Bob gazed at her slim legs below the hem of the robe. "How nice you look today."

She laughed. "Be careful! Maybe I shouldn't let you in after all."

They looked at one another, half amused half frightened. Presently Bob said, "If you want, I'll—"

"No, for God's sake." She caught hold of his sleeve. "Just get out of the doorway so I can

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

close it. Mrs. Peters across the street, you know."

She closed the door. "And I want to show you something," she said. "You haven't seen it."

He was interested. "An antique? Or what?"

She took his arm, leading him toward the dining-room. "You'll love it, Bobby." She stopped, wide-eyed. "I hope you will. You must; you must love it. It means so much to me—*he* means so much."

"He?" Bob frowned. "Who is he?"

Doris laughed. "You're jealous! Come on." A moment later they stood before the clock, looking up at it. "He'll come out in a few minutes. Wait until you see him. I know you two will get along just fine."

"What does Larry think of him?"

"They don't like each other. Sometimes when Larry's here he won't come out. Larry gets mad if he doesn't come out on time. He says—"

"Says what?"

Doris looked down. "He always says he's been robbed, even if he did get it wholesale." She brightened. "But I know he won't come out because he doesn't like Larry. When I'm here alone he comes right out for me, every fifteen minutes, even though he really only has to come out on the hour."

She gazed up at the clock. "He comes out for me because he wants to. We talk; I tell him things. Of course, I'd like to have him upstairs in my room, but it wouldn't be right."

There was the sound of footsteps on the front porch. They looked at each other, horrified.

Larry pushed the front door open, grunting. He set his briefcase down and took off his hat. Then he saw Bob for the first time.

"Chambers. I'll be damned." His eyes narrowed. "What are you doing here?" He came into the dining-room. Doris drew her robe about her helplessly, backing away.

"I—" Bob began. "That is, we —" He broke off, glancing at Doris. Suddenly the clock began to whirr. The cuckoo came rushing out, bursting into sound. Larry moved toward him.

"Shut that din off," he said. He raised his fist toward the clock. The cuckoo snapped into silence and retreated. The door closed. "That's better." Larry studied Doris and Bob, standing mutely together.

"I came over to look at the clock," Bob said. "Doris told me that it's a rare antique and that—"

"Nuts. I bought it myself." Larry walked up to him. "Get out of here." He turned to Doris. "You too. And take that damn clock with you."

He paused, rubbing his chin. "No. Leave the clock here. It's mine; I bought it and paid for it."

In the weeks that followed after

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Doris left, Larry and the cuckoo clock got along even worse than before. For one thing, the cuckoo stayed inside most of the time, sometimes even at twelve o'clock when he should have been busiest. And if he did come out at all he usually spoke only once or twice, never the correct number of times. And there was a sullen, uncooperative note in his voice, a jarring sound that made Larry uneasy and a little angry.

But he kept the clock wound, because the house was very still and quiet and it got on his nerves not to hear someone running around, talking and dropping things. And even the whirring of a clock sounded good to him.

But he didn't like the cuckoo at all. And sometimes he spoke to him.

"Listen," he said late one night to the closed little door. "I know you can hear me. I ought to give you back to the Germans—back to the Black Forest." He paced back and forth. "I wonder what they're doing now, the two of them. That young punk with his books and his antiques. A man shouldn't be interested in antiques; that's for women."

He set his jaw. "Isn't that right?"

The clock said nothing. Larry walked up in front of it. "Isn't that right?" he demanded. "Don't you have anything to say?"

He looked at the face of the clock. It was almost eleven, just a few seconds before the hour. "All right. I'll wait until eleven. Then I want to hear what you have to say. You've been pretty quiet the last few weeks since she left."

He grinned wryly. "Maybe you don't like it here since she's gone." He scowled. "Well, I paid for you, and you're coming out whether you like it or not. You hear me?"

Eleven o'clock came. Far off, at the end of town, the great tower clock boomed sleepily to itself. But the little door remained shut. Nothing moved. The minute hand passed on and the cuckoo did not stir. He was someplace inside the clock, beyond the door, silent and remote.

"All right, if that's the way you feel," Larry murmured, his lips twisting. "But it isn't fair. It's your job to come out. We all have to do things we don't like."

He went unhappily into the kitchen and opened the great gleaming refrigerator. As he poured himself a drink he thought about the clock.

There was no doubt about it—the cuckoo should come out, Doris or no Doris. He had always liked her, from the very start. They had got along well, the two of them. Probably he liked Bob too—probably he had seen enough of Bob to get to know him. They would be quite happy together, Bob and Doris and the cuckoo.

Larry finished his drink. He opened the drawer at the sink and took out the hammer. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

carried it carefully into the dining-room. The clock was ticking gently to itself on the wall.

"Look," he said, waving the hammer. "You know what I have here? You know what I'm going to do with it? I'm going to start on you—first." He smiled. "Birds of a feather, that's what you are—the three of you."

The room was silent.

"Are you coming out? Or do I have to come in and get you?"

The clock whirred a little.

"I hear you in there. You've got a lot of talking to do, enough for the last three weeks. As I figure it, you owe me—"

The door opened The cuckoo came out fast, straight at him. Larry was looking down, his brow wrinkled in thought. He glanced up, and the cuckoo caught him squarely in the eye.

Down he went, hammer and chair and everything, hitting the floor with a tremendous crash. For a moment the cuckoo paused, its small body poised rigidly. Then it went back inside its house. The door snapped tight-shut after it.

The man lay on the floor, stretched out grotesquely, his head bent over to one side. Nothing moved or stirred. The room was completely silent, except, of course, for the ticking of the clock.

"I see," Doris said, her face tight. Bob put his arm around her, steadying her.

"Doctor," Bob said, "can I ask you something?"

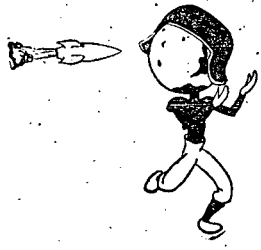
"Of course," the doctor said.

"Is it very easy to break your neck, falling from so low a chair? It wasn't very far to fall. I wonder if it might not have been an accident. Is there any chance it might have been—"

"Suicide?" the doctor rubbed his jaw. "I never heard of anyone committing suicide that way. It was an accident; I'm positive."

"I don't mean suicide," Bob murmured under his breath, looking up at the clock on the wall. "I meant *something else.*"

But no one heard him.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lost in the future

by . . . John Victor Peterson

They had discovered a new planet —but its people did not see them until after they had traveled on.

ALBRECHT AND I went down in a shuttleship, leaving the stellatomic orbited pole-to-pole two thousand miles above Alpha Centauri's second planet. While we took an atmosphere-brushing approach which wouldn't burn off the shuttle's skin, we went as swiftly as we could.

A week before we had completed man's first trip through hyperspace. We were now making the first landing on an inhabited planet of another sun. All the preliminary investigations had been made via electronspectroscopes and electrontelescopes from the stellatomic.

We knew that the atmosphere was breathable and were reasonably certain that the peoples of the world into whose atmosphere we were dropping were at peace. We went unarmed, just the two of us; it might not be wise to go in force.

We were silent, and I know that Harry Albrecht was as perplexed as I was over the fact that our all-wave receivers failed to pick up any signs of radio communication whatever. We had assumed that we would pick up signals of some type as soon as we had passed down through the unfamiliar planet's ionosphere.

Did you ever wonder what might happen if mankind ever exceeded the speed of light? Here is a profound story based on that thought—a story which may well forecast one of the problems to be encountered in space travel.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The scattered arrangement of the towering cities appeared to call for radio communications. The hundreds of atmosphere ships flashing along a system of airways between the cities seemed to indicate the existence of electronic navigational and landing aids. But perhaps the signals were all tightly-beamed; we would know when we came lower.

We dropped down into the airway levels, and still our receivers failed to pick up a signal of any sort—not even a whisper of static. And strangely, our radarscopes failed to record even a blip from their atmosphere ships!

"I guess it's our equipment, Harry," I said. "It just doesn't seem to function in this atmosphere. We'll have to put Edwards to work on it when we go back upstairs."

We spotted an airport on the outskirts of a large city. The runways were laid out with the precision of Earth's finest. I put our ship's nose eastward on a runway and took it down fast through a lull in the atmosphere ship traffic.

As we went down I saw tiny buildings spotted on the field which surely housed electronic equipment, but our receivers remained silent.

I taxied the shuttle up to an unloading ramp before the airport's terminal building and I killed the drive.

"Harry," I said, "if it weren't that their ships are so outlandishly stubby and their buildings so outflung, we might well be on Earth!"

"I agree, Captain. Strange, though, that they're not mobbing us. They couldn't take this delta-winged job for one of their ships!"

It *was* strange.

I looked up at the observation ramp's occupants—people who except for their bizarre dress might well be of Earth—and saw no curiosity in the eyes that sometimes swept across our position.

"Be that as it may, Harry, we certainly should cause a stir in these pressure suits. Let's go!"

We walked up to a dour-looking individual at a counter at the ramp's end. Clearing my throat, I said rather inanely, "Hello!"—but what *does* one say to an extrasolarian?

I realized then that my voice seemed thunderous, that the only other sounds came from a distance: the city's noise, the atmosphere ships' engines on the horizon—

The Centaurian ignored us.

I looked at the atmosphere ships in the clear blue sky, at the Centaurians on the ramp who appeared to be conversing—and there was no sound from those planes, no sound from the people!

"It's impossible," Harry said. "The atmosphere's nearly Earth-normal. It should be—well, damn it, it *is* as sound-conductive; *we're* talking, aren't we?"

I looked up at the Centaurians

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

again. They were looking excitedly westward. Some turned to companions. Mouths opened and closed to form words we could not hear. Wide eyes lowered, following something I could not see. Sick inside, I turned to Albrecht and read confirmation in his drawn, blanched face.

"Captain," he said, "I suspected that we might find something like this when we first came out of hyperspace and the big sleep. The recorders showed we'd exceeded light-speed in normal space-time just after the transition. Einstein theorized that time would not pass as swiftly to those approaching light-speed. We could safely exceed that speed in hyperspace but should never have done so in normal spacetime. Beyond light-speed time must conversely accelerate!

"These people haven't seen *us* yet. They certainly just observed our landing. As we suspected, they probably do have speech and radio—but we can't pick up either. We're seconds ahead of them in time and we can't pick up from the past sounds of nearby origin or nearby signals radiated at light-speed. They'll see and hear us soon, but we'll never receive an answer from *them!* Our questions will come to them in their future but we can never pick answers from their past!"

"Let's go, Harry," I said quickly.

"Where?" he asked. "Where can we ever go that will be an improvement over this?" He was resigned.

"Back into space," I said. "Back to circle this system at a near-light-speed. The computers should be able to determine how long and how slow we'll have to fly to cancel this out. If not, we are truly and forever lost!"

In the current issue of our companion publication, THE SAINT DETECTIVE MAGAZINE, *we bring you a fine short novel by Philip Wylie,* IT COULDN'T BE MURDER, *and a new Saint novelette by Leslie Charteris,* THE REVOLUTION RACKET.

Also included are short stories by E. Phillips Oppenheim, Brett Halliday, Ben Ames Williams, Sax Rohmer and many others.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the record of currupira

by . . . Robert Abernathy

From ancient Martian records came the grim song of a creature whose very existence was long forgotten.

JAMES DALTON strode briskly through the main exhibit room of New York's Martian Museum, hardly glancing to right or left though many displays had been added since his last visit. The rockets were coming home regularly now and their most valuable cargoes—at least from a scientist's point of view—were the relics of an alien civilization brought to light by the archeologists excavating the great dead cities.

One new exhibit did catch Dalton's eye. He paused to read the label with interest—

MAN FROM MARS:

The body here preserved was found December 12, 2001, by an exploring party from the spaceship NEVADA, *in the Martian city which we designate E-3. It rested in a case much like this, in a building that had evidently been the municipal museum. Around it, in other cases likewise undisturbed since a period estimated at fifty thousand years ago, were a number of Earthly artifacts. These finds prove beyond doubt that a Martian scientific expedition visited Earth before the dawn of our history.*

This story contains what is, to us, at any rate, a novel idea—that when we of Earth finally reach Mars we may find there records of prehistoric Earth far surpassing those of our paleontologists. Or, in other words, that creatures of Mars may have visited this planet tens of thousands of years ago and returned home with specimens for their science. A nice idea well told.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On the label someone had painstakingly copied the Martian glyphs found on the mummy's original case. Dalton's eyes traced the looping ornamental script—he was one of the very few men who had put in the years of work necessary to read inscriptional Martian—and he smiled appreciation of a jest that had taken fifty thousand years to ripen—the writing said simply, *Man From Earth.*

The mummy lying on a sculptured catafalque beyond the glass was amazingly well preserved—far more lifelike and immensely older than anything Egypt had yielded. Long-dead Martian embalmers had done a good job even on what to them was the corpse of an other-world monster.

He had been a small wiry man. His skin was dark though its color might have been affected by mummification. His features suggested those of the Forest Indian. Beside him lay his flaked-stone ax, his bone-pointed spear and spear thrower, likewise preserved by a marvelous chemistry.

Looking down at that ancient nameless ancestor, Dalton was moved to solmen thoughts. This creature had been first of all human-kind to make the tremendous crossing to Mars—had seen its lost race in living glory, had died there and became a museum exhibit for the multiple eyes of wise grey spiderish aliens.

"Interested in Oswald, sir?" Dalton glanced up and saw an attendant. "I was just thinking—if he could only talk! He does have a name, then?"

The guard grinned. "Well, we call him Oswald. Sort of inconvenient, not having a name. When I worked at the Metropolitan we used to call all the Pharaohs and Assyrian kings by their first names."

Dalton mentally classified another example of the deep human need for verbal handles to lift unwieldy chunks of environment. The professional thought recalled him to business and he glanced at his watch.

"I'm supposed to meet Dr. Oliver Thwaite here this morning. Has he come in yet?"

"The archeologist? He's here early and late when he's on Earth. He'll be up in the cataloguing department now. Want me to show you—"

"I know the way," said Dalton. "Thanks all the same." He left the elevator at the fourth floor and impatiently pushed open the main cataloguing room's glazed door.

Inside cabinets and broad tables bore a wilderness of strange artifacts, many still crusted with red Martian sand. Alone in the room a trim-mustached man in a rough open-throated shirt looked up from an object he had been cleaning with a soft brush.

"Dr. Thwaite? I'm Jim Dalton."

"Glad to meet you, Professor." Thwaite carefully laid down his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

work, then rose to grip the visitor's hand. "You didn't lose any time."

"After you called last night I managed to get a seat on the dawn-rocket out of Chicago. I hope I'm not interrupting?"

"Not at all. I've got some assistants coming in around nine. I was just going over some stuff I don't like to trust to their thumb-fingered mercies."

Dalton looked down at the thing the archeologist had been brushing. It was a reed syrinx, the Pan's pipes of antiquity. "That's not a very Martian-looking specimen," he commented.

"The Martians, not having any lips, could hardly have had much use for it," said Thwaite. "This is of Earthly manufacture—one of the Martians' specimens from Earth, kept intact over all this time by a preservative I wish we knew how to make. It's a nice find, man's earliest known musical instrument—hardly as interesting as the record though."

Dalton's eyes brightened. "Have you listened to the record yet?"

"No. We got the machine working last night and ran off some of the Martian stuff. Clear as a bell. But I saved the main attraction for when you got here." Thwaite turned to a side door, fishing a key from his pocket. "The playback machine's in here."

The apparatus, squatting on a sturdy table in the small room beyond, had the slightly haywire look of an experimental model. But it was little short of a miracle to those who knew how it had been built—on the basis of radioed descriptions of the ruined device the excavators had dug up on Mars.

Even more intriguing, however, was the row of neatly labeled boxes on a shelf. There in cushioned nests reposed little cylinders of age-tarnished metal, on which a close observer could still trace the faint engraved lines and whorls of Martian script. These were the best-preserved specimens yet found of Martian record films.

Sound and pictures were on them, impressed there by a triumphant science so long ago that the code of Hammurabi or the hieroglyphs of Khufu seemed by comparison like yesterday's newspaper. Men of Earth were ready now to evoke these ancient voices—but to reproduce the stereoscopic images was still beyond human technology.

Dalton scrutinized one label intently. "Odd," he said. "I realize how much the Martian archives may have to offer us when we master their spoken language—but I still want most to hear *this* record, the one the Martians made right here on Earth."

Thwaite nodded comprehendingly. "The human race is a good deal like an amnesia patient that wakes up at the age of forty and finds himself with a fairly prosperous business, a wife and children and a mortgage, but no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

recollection of his youth or infancy—and nobody around to tell him how he got where he is.

"We invented writing so dog-gone late in the game. Now we get to Mars and find the people there knew us before we knew ourselves—but they died or maybe picked up and went, leaving just this behind." He used both hands to lift the precious gray cylinder from its box. "And of course you linguists in particular get a big charge out of this discovery."

"*If* it's a record of human speech it'll be the oldest ever found. It may do for comparative-historical linguistics what the Rosetta Stone did for Egyptology." Dalton grinned boyishly. "Some of us even nurse the hope it may do something for our old headache—the problem of the origin of langauge. That was one of the most important, maybe *the* most important step in human progress—and we don't know how or when or why!"

"I've heard of the bowwow theory and the dingdong theory," said Thwaite, his hands busy with the machine.

"Pure speculations. The plain fact is we haven't even been able to make an informed guess because the evidence, the written records, only run back about six thousand years. That racial amnesia you spoke of.

"Personally, I have a weakness for the magical theory—that man invented language in the search for magic formulae, words of power. Unlike the other theories, that one assumes as the motive force not merely passive imitativeness but an outgoing will.

"Even the speechless subman must have observed that he could affect the behavior of animals of his own and other species by making appropriate noises—a mating call or a terrifying shout, for instance. Hence the perennial conviction you can get what you want if you just hold your mouth right, *and* you know the proper prayers or curses."

"A logical conclusion from the animistic viewpoint," said Thwaite. He frowned over the delicate task of starting the film, inquired offhandedly, "You got the photostat of the label inscription? What did you make of it?"

"Not much more than Henderson did on Mars. There's the date of the recording and the place—the longitude doesn't mean anything to us because we still don't know where the Martians fixed their zero meridian. But it was near the equator and, the text indicates, in a tropical forest—probably in Africa or South America.

"Then there's the sentence Henderson couldn't make out. It's obscure and rather badly defaced, but it's evidently a comment—unfavorable—on the subject-matter of the recording. In it appears twice a sort of interjection-adverb that in other contexts implies

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

revulsion—something like *ugh!*"

"Funny. Looks like the Martians saw something on Earth they didn't like. Too bad we can't reproduce the visual record yet."

Dalton said soberly, "The Martian's vocabulary indicates that for all their physical difference from us they had emotions very much like human beings'. Whatever they saw must have been something we wouldn't have liked either."

The reproducer hummed softly. Thwaite closed the motor switch and the ancient film slid smoothly from its casing. Out of the speaker burst a strange medley of whirrings, clicks, chirps, trills and modulated drones and buzzings—a sound like the voice of grasshoppers in a drought-stricken field of summer.

Dalton listened raptly, as if by sheer concentration he might even now be able to guess at connections between the sounds of spoken Martian—heard now for the first time—and the written symbols that he had been working over for years. But he couldn't, of course—that would require a painstaking correlation analysis.

"Evidently it's an introduction or commentary," said the archeologist. "Our photocell examination showed the wave-patterns of the initial and final portions of the film were typically Martian—but the middle part isn't. The middle part is whatever they recorded here on Earth."

"If only that last part is a translation . . ." said Dalton hopefully. Then the alien susurration ceased coming from the reproducer and he closed his mouth abruptly and leaned forward.

For the space of a caught breath there was silence. Then another voice came in, the voice of Earth hundreds of centuries dead.

It was not human. No more than the first had been—but the Martian sounds had been merely alien and these were horrible.

It was like nothing so much as the croaking of some gigantic frog, risen bellowing from a bottomless primeval swamp. It bayed of stinking sunless pools and gurgled of black ooze. And its booming notes descended to subsonic throbbings that gripped and wrung the nerves to anguish.

Dalton was involuntarily on his feet, clawing for the switch. But he stopped, reeling. His head spun and he could not see. Through his dizzy brain the great voice roared and the mighty tones below hearing hammered at the inmost fortress of the man's will.

On the heels of that deafening assault the voice began to change. The numbing thunder rumbled back, repeating the pain and the threat—but underneath something crooned and wheedled obscenely. It said, *"Come . . . come . . . come . . ."* And the stunned prey came on stumbling feet, shivering with a terror that could not break the spell.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Where the squat black machine had been was something that was also squat and black and huge. It crouched motionless and blind in the mud and from its pulsing expanded throat vibrated the demonic croaking. As the victim swayed helplessly nearer the mouth opened wide upon long rows of frightful teeth . . .

The monstrous song stopped suddenly. Then still another voice cried briefly, thinly in agony and despair. That voice was human.

Each of the two men looked into a white strange face. They were standing on opposite sides of the table and between them the playback machine had fallen silent. Then it began to whir again in the locust speech of the Martian commentator, explaining rapidly, unintelligibly.

Thwaite found the switch with wooden fingers. As if with one accord they retreated from the black machine. Neither of them even tried to make a false show of self-possession. Each knew, from his first glimpse of the other's dilated staring eyes, that both had experienced and seen the same.

Dalton sank shivering into a chair, the darkness still swirling threateningly in his brain. Presently he said, "The expression of a will—that much was true. But the will—was not of man."

James Dalton took a vacation. After a few days he went to a psychiatrist, who observed the usual symptoms of overwork and worry and recommended a change of scene—a rest in the country.

On the first night at a friend's secluded farm Dalton awoke drenched in cold sweat. Through the open window from not far away came a hellish serenade, the noise of frogs—the high nervous voices of peepers punctuating the deep leisured booming of bullfrogs.

The linguist flung on his clothes and drove back at reckless speed to where there were lights and the noises of men and their machines. He spent the rest of his vacation burrowing under the clamor of the city whose steel and pavements proclaimed man's victory over the very grass that grew.

After awhile he felt better and needed work again. He took up his planned study of the Martian recordings, correlating the spoken words with the written ones he had already arduously learned to read.

The Martian Museum readily lent him the recordings he requested for use in his work, including the one made on Earth. He studied the Martian-language portion of this and succeeded in making a partial translation—but carefully refrained from playing the middle section of the film back again.

Came a day, though, when it occurred to him that he had heard not a word from Thwaite. He made inquiries through the Museum and learned that the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

archeologist had applied for a leave of absence and left before it was granted. Gone where? The Museum people didn't know—but Thwaite had not been trying to cover his trail. A call to Global Air Transport brought the desired information.

A premonition ran up Dalton's spine—but he was surprised at how calmly he thought and acted. He picked up the phone and called Transport again—this time their booking department.

"When's the earliest time I can get passage to Belem?" he asked.

With no more than an hour to pack and catch the rocket he hurried to the Museum. The place was more or less populated with sightseers, which was annoying, because Dalton's plans now included larceny.

He waited before the building till the coast was clear, then, with handkerchief-wrapped knuckles, broke the glass and tripped the lever on the fire alarm. In minutes a wail of sirens and roar of arriving motors was satisfyingly loud in the main exhibit room. Police and fire department helicopters buzzed overhead. A wave of mingled fright and curiosity swept visitors and attendants alike to the doors.

Dalton, lingering, found himself watched only by the millennially sightless eyes of the man who lay in state in an airless glass tomb. The stern face was inscrutable behind the silence of many thousand years.

"Excuse me, Oswald," murmured Dalton. "I'd like to borrow something of yours but I'm sure you won't mind."

The reed flute was in a long case devoted to Earthly specimens. Unhesitatingly Dalton smashed the glass.

Brazil is a vast country, and it cost much trouble and time and expense before Dalton caught up with Thwaite in a forlorn river-bank town along the line where civilization hesitates on the shore of that vast sea of vegetation called the *mato*. Night had just fallen when Dalton arrived. He found Thwaite alone in a lighted room of the single drab hotel—alone and very busy.

The archeologist was shaggily unshaven. He looked up and said something that might have been a greeting devoid of surprise. Dalton grimaced apologetically, set down his suitcase and pried the wax plugs out of his ears, explaining with a gesture that included the world outside, where the tree frogs sang deafeningly in the hot stirring darkness of the near forest.

"How do you stand it?" he asked.

Thwaite's lips drew back from his teeth. "I'm fighting it," he said shortly, picking up his work again. On the bed where he sat were scattered steel cartridge clips. He was going through them with a small file, carefully cutting a deep cross in the soft nose of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

every bullet. Nearby a heavy-caliber rifle leaned against a wardrobe. Other things were in evidence—boots, canteens, knapsacks, the tough clothing a man needs in the *mato*.

"You're looking for *it*."

Thwaite's eyes burned feverishly. "Yes. Do you think I'm crazy?"

Dalton pulled a rickety chair toward him and sat down straddling it. "I don't know," he said slowly. "*It* was very likely a creature of the last interglacial period. The ice may have finished its kind."

"The ice never touched these equatorial forests." Thwaite smiled unpleasantly. "And the Indians and old settlers down here have stories—about a thing that calls in the *mato*, that can paralyze a man with fear. *Currupira* is their name for it.

"When I remembered those stories they fell into place alongside a lot of others from different countries and times—the Sirens, for instance, and the Lorelei. Those legends are ancient. But perhaps here in the Amazon basin, in the forests that have never been cut and the swamps that have never been drained, the *currupira* is still real and alive. I *hope* so!"

"Why?"

"I want to meet it. I want to show it that men can destroy it with all its unholy power." Thwaite bore down viciously on the file and the bright flakes of lead glittered to the floor beside his feet.

Dalton watched him with eyes of compassion. He heard the frog music swelling outside, a harrowing reminder of ultimate blasphemous insult, and he felt the futility of argument.

"Remember, I heard it too, Dalton said. "And I sensed what you did. That voice or some combination of frequencies or overtones within it, is resonant to the essence of evil—the fundamental life-hating self-destroying evil in man—even to have glimpsed it, to have heard the brainless beast mocking, was an outrage to humanity that a man must . . ."

Dalton paused, got a grip on himself. "But, consider—the outrage was wiped out, humanity won its victory over the monster a long time ago. What if it isn't quite extinct? That record was fifty thousand years old."

"What did you do with the record?" Thwaite looked up sharply.

"I obliterated that—the voice and the pictures that went with it from the film before I returned it to the Museum."

Thwaite sighed deeply. "Good. I was damning myself for not doing that before I left."

The linguist said, "I think it answered my question as much as I want it answered. The origin of speech—lies in the will to power, the lust to dominate other men by preying on the weakness or evil in them.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Those first men didn't just guess that such power existed—they *knew* because the beast had taught them and they tried to imitate it—the mystagogues and tyrants through the ages, with voices, with tomtoms and bull-roarers and trumpets. What makes the memory of that voice so hard to live with is just knowing that what it called to is a part of man—isn't that it?"

Thwaite didn't answer. He had taken the heavy rifle across his knees and was methodically testing the movement of the well-oiled breech mechanism.

Dalton stood up wearily and picked up his suitcase. "I'll check into the hotel. Suppose we talk this over some more in the morning. Maybe things'll look different by daylight."

But in the morning Thwaite was gone—upriver with a hired boatman, said the natives. The note he had left said only, *Sorry. But it's no use talking about humanity—this is personal.*

Dalton crushed the note angrily, muttering under his breath, "The fool! Didn't he realize I'd go with him?" He hurled the crumpled paper aside and stalked out to look for a guide.

They chugged slowly westward up the forest-walled river, an obscure tributary that flowed somewhere into the Xingú. After four days, they had hopes of being close on the others' track. The brown-faced guide, Joao, who held the tiller now, was a magician. He had conjured up an ancient outboard motor for the scow-like boat Dalton had bought from a fisherman.

The sun was setting murkily and the sluggish swell of the water ahead was the color of witch's blood. Under its opaque surface *a mae dágua,* the Mother of Water, ruled over creatures slimy and razor-toothed. In the blackness beneath the great trees, where it was dark even at noon, other beings had their kingdom.

Out of the forest came the crying grunting hooting voices of its life that woke at nightfall, fiercer and more feverish than that of the daytime. To the man from the north there seemed something indecent in the fertile febrile swarming of life here. Compared to a temperate woodland the *mato* was like a metropolis against a sleepy village.

"What's that?" Dalton demanded sharply as a particularly hideous squawk floated across the water.

"Nao é nada. A bicharia agita-se." Joao shrugged. "The menagerie agitates itself." His manner indicated that some *bichinho* beneath notice had made the noise.

But moments later the little brown man became rigid. He half rose to his feet in the boat's stern, then stooped and shut off the popping motor. In the relative silence the other heard what he had—far off and indistinct, mut-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tering deep in the black *mato*, a voice that croaked of ravenous hunger in accents abominably known to him.

"Currupira," said Joao tensely. *"Currupira sai á caçada da noite."* He watched the foreigner with eyes that gleamed in the fading light like polished onyx.

"Avante!" snapped Dalton. "See if it comes closer to the river this time."

It was not the first time they had heard that voice calling since they had ventured deep into the unpeopled swampland about which the downriver settlements had fearful stories to whisper.

Silently the guide spun the engine. The boat sputtered on. Dalton strained his eyes, watching the darkening shore as he had watched fruitlessly for so many miles.

But now, as they rounded a gentle bend, he glimpsed a small reddish spark near the bank. Then, by the last glimmer of the swiftly fading twilight, he made out a boat pulled up under gnarled tree-roots. That was all he could see but the movement of the red spark told him a man was sitting in the boat, smoking a cigarette.

"In there," he ordered in a low voice but Joao had seen already and was steering toward the shore.

The cigarette arched into the water and hissed out and they heard a scuffling and lap of water as the other boat swayed, which meant that the man in it had stood up.

He sprang into visibility as a flashlight in Dalton's hand went on. A squat, swarthy man with rugged features, a *caboclo*, of white and Indian blood. He blinked expressionlessly at the light.

"Where is the American scientist?" demanded Dalton in Portuguese.

"Quem sabe? Foi-se."

"Which way did he go?"

"Nao importa. O doutor é doido; nao ha-de-voltar," said the man suddenly. "It doesn't matter. The doctor is crazy—he won't come back."

"Answer me, damn it! Which way?"

The *caboclo* jerked his shoulders nervously and pointed.

"Come on!" said Dalton and scrambled ashore even as Joao was stopping the motor and making the boat fast beside the other. "He's gone in after it!"

The forest was a black labyrinth. Its tangled darkness seemed to drink up the beam of the powerful flashlight Dalton had brought, its uneasy rustlings and animal-noises pressed in to swallow the sound of human movements for which he strained his ears, fearing to call out. He pushed forward recklessly, carried on by a sort of inertia of determination; behind him Joao followed, though he moved woodenly and muttered prayers under his breath.

Then somewhere very near a great voice croaked briefly and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was silent— so close that it poured a wave of faintness over the hearer, seemed to send numbing electricity tingling along his motor nerves.

Joao dropped to his knees and flung both arms about a tree-bole. His brown face when the light fell on it was shiny with sweat, his eyes dilated and blind-looking. Dalton slammed the heel of his hand against the man's shoulder and got no response save for a tightening of the grip on the treetrunk, and a pitiful whimper, "*Assombra-me*—it overshadows me!"

Dalton swung the flashlight beam ahead and saw nothing. Then all at once, not fifty yards away, a single glowing eye sprang out of the darkness, arched through the air and hit the ground to blaze into searing brilliance and white smoke. The clearing in which it burned grew bright as day, and Dalton saw a silhouetted figure clutching a rifle and turning its head from side to side.

He plunged headlong toward the light of the flare, shouting, "Thwaite, you idiot! You *can't*—"

And then the *surrupira* spoke.

Its bellowing seemed to come from all around, from the ground, the trees, the air. It smote like a blow in the stomach that drives out wind and fight. And it roared on, lashing at the wills of those who heard it, beating and stamping them out like sparks of a scattered fire.

Dalton groped with one hand for his pocket but his hand kept slipping away into a matterless void as his vision threatened to slip into blindness. Dimly he saw Thwaite, a stone's throw ahead of him, start to lift his weapon and then stand frozen, swaying a little on his feet as if buffeted by waves of sound.

Already the second theme was coming in—the insidious obbligato of invitation to death, wheedling that *this way . . . this way . . .* was the path from the torment and terror that the monstrous voice flooded over them.

Thwaite took a stiff step, then another and another, toward the black wall of the *mato* that rose beyond the clearing. With an indescribable shudder Dalton realized that he too had moved an involuntary step forward. The *currupira's* voice rose triumphantly.

With a mighty effort of will Dalton closed fingers he could not feel on the object in his pocket. Like a man lifting a mountain he lifted it to his lips.

A high sweet note cut like a knife through the roll of nightmare drums. With terrible concentration Dalton shifted his fingers and blew and blew . . .

Piercing and lingering, the tones of the pipes flowed into his veins, tingling, warring with the numbing poison of the *currupira's* song.

Dalton was no musician but it seemed to him then that an ancestral instinct was with him, guiding

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his breath and his fingers. The powers of the monster were darkness and cold and weariness of living, the death-urge recoiling from life into nothingness.

But the powers of the pipes were life and light and warmth, life returning when the winter is gone, greenness and laughter and love. Life was in them, life of men dead these thousand generations, life even of the craftsmen on an alien planet who had preserved their form and their meaning for this moment.

Dalton advanced of his own will until he stood beside Thwaite —but the other remained unstirring and Dalton did not dare pause for a moment, while the monster yet bellowed in the blackness before them. The light of the flare was reddening, dying . . .

After a seeming eternity he saw motion, saw the rifle muzzle swing up. The shot was deafening in his ear, but it was an immeasurable relief. As it echoed the *currupira's* voice was abruptly silent. In the bushes ahead there was a rending of branches, a frantic slithering movement of a huge body.

They followed the noises in a sort of frenzy, plunging toward them heedless of thorns and whipping branches. The flashlight stabbed and revealed nothing. Out of the shadows a bass croaking came again, and Thwaite fired twice at the sound and there was silence save for a renewed flurry of cracking twigs.

Along the water's edge, obscured by the trees between, moved something black and huge, that shone wetly. Thwaite dropped to one knee and began firing at it, emptying the magazine.

They pressed forward to the margin of the slough, feet squishing in the deep muck. Dalton played his flashlight on the water's surface and the still-moving ripples seemed to reflect redly.

Thwaite was first to break the silence. He said grimly, "Damned lucky for me you got here when you did. It—*had* me."

Dalton nodded without speaking.

"But how did you know what to do?" Thwaite asked.

"It wasn't my discovery," said the linguist soberly. "Our remote ancestors met this threat and invented a weapon against it. Otherwise man might not have survived. I learned the details from the Martian records when I succeeded in translating them. Fortunately the Martians also preserved a specimen of the weapon our ancestors invented."

He held up the little reed flute and the archeologist's eyes widened with recognition.

Dalton looked out across the dark swamp-water, where the ripples were fading out. "In the beginning there was the voice of evil—but there was also the music of good, created to combat it. Thank God that in mankind's makeup there's more than one fundamental note!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the odyssey of sam meecham

by . . . Charles E. Fritch

Sam Meecham did not realize that his chance discovery of unlimited power would bring back that which he had lost eight long years ago.

To look at Sam Meecham you'd never have dreamed he was a man of decision and potential explorer of the unknown. In fact, there were times when Sam wouldn't either. He was a pink, frail-looking person with a weak chin and shoulders used to stooping, and stereotyped thinking immediately relegated him to the ranks of the meek and mannerly. These, oddly enough, happened to be his characteristics—but that was before he discovered the hyperdrive.

In his capacity as an atomic engine inspector, his work was most uncreative. He was a small cog in a large cog-laden machine. A government worker helping to produce engines that would send supplies and immigrants and tourists to the U. S. Sector of the Moon Colony.

Day after day, week after week, freshly made engines would come sliding down the conveyor belt. And mechanically Sam Meecham would attach to each two wires that led from a machine by his side, flip a switch, and if the dial on his machine read at least fifty, he could pass the machine on as being adequate for the job of Moon ferry. He'd been attaching

This story may, in a sense, be tongue-in-cheek. But the underlying struggle, if you look into the characters' hearts, is terrifyingly real and human—the kind of struggle so many of us go through. But Sam Meecham was lucky. He not only got what he wanted, but something he hadn't realized he wanted.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

those two wires in place and watching fifties for five years, and it looked as though he'd be doing it for fifty-five more.

Then one day a defectively wired machine came sliding along, and dutifully Sam hooked it up and flipped the switch. Automatically, his eyes glanced disinterestedly at the dial showing Comparative Thrust. His eyes bugged. The needle had passed fifty, had gone to the 100 mark (never before reached), struck the metal projection, bent, and was whirling in a rapid circle!

Sam quickly cut off the motor, then he glanced furtively about to see if anyone had noticed. The room was a flurry of men busy at routine tasks and none of them seemed particularly interested in anything that was going on at his table.

Sam checked his own machine and found the tester in perfect working order. He hesitated a brief moment, then flipped the switch again. He was prepared for the whir of the dial now but still it frightened him a little. There must be something wrong; no atomic engine could have that much Comparative Thrust. Yet —the tester was perfect.

Sam Meecham shut off the tester and stood very still for a minute and thought about it. His glance fell on the intricate wiring within the atomic engine and he saw with a start that it looked different from usual. Wires were where wires had never been before, where wires were not supposed to be.

With another quick glance about him Sam began copying the wiring pattern on a sheet of paper. He thrust the paper into his pocket as the foreman came up to him.

"Say, Meecham," the foreman said, "that last engine okay?"

Sam Meecham hesitated briefly, then said, "The wiring was a little fouled up. Busted the dial on the tester."

The foreman shook his head. "I was afraid of that. Some wireman on the third floor came in half drunk a few minutes ago. That was only his first machine, so the others ought to be okay." He jabbed a finger at the engine. "You'd better send it back up."

When the foreman was gone Sam checked the wiring with his diagram to make certain he hadn't made any mistakes, and then he disconnected some of the wires—just in case.

For the first time in years Sam Meecham felt a new freedom. He'd always been a dreamer hampered by cold reality—a man with his head in the stars and his feet chained to solid earth. He'd wanted to go to the Moon when the government first started colonizing; but Dorothy, his wife, talked him out of it.

At various times he had felt that secret longing, that beckoning of the stars, but each time he had shelved the desire and turned to attaching his two wires of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tester to their proper terminals on each atomic engine, and then when his shift was up he turned homeward to face an existence equally uninspiring.

The moment he had seen that needle pass into the hundreds, Sam Meecham knew what he was going to do. He had planned it years ago, when he first stood alone in the night and gazed upward at the glittering diamonds that lay beyond reach. Even then he had known what he would do if ever the opportunity presented itself. In those moments of self-pity that came too often, however, he had told himself that it was only wishful thinking and cursed himself for being a weakling and a dreamer who did nothing about his dreams. But he had resolved that someday he *would* go out among the stars.

That day had come, and as Sam Meecham went homeward that evening he felt his heart beat in time with the pulsing light of the stars overhead. But with this new exultation he felt a desperate fear. A fear that he might again bypass his opportunity as he had done so often before. Yet he knew that this was his greatest chance, perhaps his last chance. He must be brave and strong, and above all confident that his intense longing would make his venture successful.

"How did everything go?" Dorothy asked when he came in.

It was a mechanical question and he answered it mechanically, "Okay. Everything went as usual."

He didn't want to look at her. She had grown plump since they had married eight years ago, and by not looking at her he could somehow pretend she was still slim and attractive.

She was lying on a couch, wearing a housecoat, and didn't look up from the magazine in front of her. "Supper's on the table," she said.

For eight years he'd had flat, uninspiring meals, meals that kept one from starving and no more. His complaints had met with more hostility than he cared to cope with, and always, meekly he had retired from the scene of battle wishing he had submitted and thus avoided the tongue lashing before which he felt so helpless.

Once more in the surroundings that bred it, a familiar, distasteful helplessness rose to envelop Sam Meecham. It came across him as a feeling of despair and bewilderment, and he wondered sickly if he would ever escape this.

Yes, he told himself, clenching his fists determinedly. But he would have to bide his time. Slowly, not really tasting it, he ate the cold, uninviting meal set on the table.

Securing the engine was the least of his worries—at least from a commercial standpoint. The factory was turning out atomic engines at almost production-line rates, and civilians could easily get them for private use—so long as they operated them at low

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

speeds and within the atmosphere of Earth.

That last thought drew a long secret laugh from Sam Meecham. At low speeds. The government considered anything above a 50 CT as high speed. And here he was with a secret that could enable him to travel at—who knows what speeds? He could give it to the government later, but right now he had his own use for it.

Dorothy would prove an obstacle, however. She always was an obstacle, and there was no reason to assume she wouldn't be one now. And he was right about that. The following payday, when he took his check and splurged it on an atomic engine, Dorothy was madder than a Uranium pile approaching critical mass.

"Here I scrimp and save on that measly paycheck you bring home," she wailed, "and you go out and buy luxuries we don't need if we could afford them. Look at this dress! It's old—all my clothes are old. And you know why? You want to know why?"

Sam Meecham already knew why. It was because as a manager of his financial affairs Dorothy was a flop. Often he had wanted to tell her so, but the more times he attempted to open his mouth the louder she had wailed. It was a lot easier just to let her explode and then fizzle out. Even now he had the desire to shout at her to see what would happen. But her shrieks made him grow sullen and unsure of himself. Perhaps he *had* wasted the money. After all, the engine they had in their outdated model rocket was good for a few years more. But for a long trip through space—it would never do.

The explosion was over and she was merely sizzling. She had folded her arms resolutely, determined that he should cancel the order for the engine immediately.

Sam Meecham felt a wave of helplessness surge over him. He felt lost and bewildered. Perhaps she was right; maybe it *was* foolish. Here he was: Sam Meecham, thirty-five, whose mediocre living was made attaching two wires to two terminals day after day, week after week—a man who suddenly saw a pointer go unexpectedly beyond the fifty mark, and who immediately began having delusions of grandeur. He was a dreamer—but dreams and reality were two different things, and sometimes he confused them. He shook his head, feeling like a fool.

"Well?" Dorothy's face was before him, determined, demanding.

Sam said, "All right I'll take it back."

She smiled condescendingly, like a mother does when a child admits a wrongdoing.

Conditioned responses, Sam thought bitterly; that was the whole trouble. This cravenness, this kowtowing before any idiot

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with a louder voice, certainly wasn't in his genes. The trouble was in his conditioning, started when he was an adolescent. Give somebody an inch and they'll take two. Pretty soon they're walking all over you, and you've become so used to it you don't complain.

He thought of his job, of the eternal fitting of two wires in place. He was a cog and nothing more—a cog that could be replaced as swiftly, as efficiently as any part of an assembly-line atomic engine could be replaced. He looked up into the blank, smiling, self-satisfied face of his wife. He thought of the stars beckoning overhead. The *stars!*

"No," he said suddenly, decisively. The word fell like a sledgehammer blow in the stillness of the room.

Dorothy's vacuous smile faded, uncomprehending. "What?"

"No," Sam said, trying to keep his voice even. "I've changed my mind. I'm keeping the engine whether you like it or not."

Dorothy's mouth hung open in surprise, and before she could recover enough to launch a fresh tirade Sam Meecham had walked out, slamming the door behind him. He paused in the cool evening and gazed upward. The government had gone only to the Moon. Sam Meecham was going to the stars!

The next day he was given the silent treatment. It had begun the night before when he returned from his walk. Dorothy was in bed, awake and sniffling over the cruelty inflicted upon her by an unthoughtful husband, and when he came in she turned her back and wouldn't speak. Sam didn't mind that; in fact, it was a welcome relief. But all night long she sniffled into her pillow, trying to win him over.

Sam felt an odd mixture of sympathy and anger. "Oh, shut up," he said finally, and stuck his head under the pillow.

In the morning the treatment continued, but it was not totally silent—for Dorothy's air of hostility was now accompanied by low, sometimes indistinct mumblings.

Suddenly Sam said, "This coffee's cold."

"If you don't like it," Dorothy said, and thrust her face near his, "make some yourself."

Sam half-rose and gripped the table. "Look, my lovely one, *I'm* the gent who brings home that weekly paycheck you can't get along without. Measly or not, it's good, honest American dough that lets us live a little decently—and the least *you* could do is give me warm coffee in the morning!"

His voice had risen almost to a shout and Sam himself was surprised at it. Dorothy's eyebrows crept into a bewildered frown, and like one in a trance she moved to turn on the heat beneath the coffee pot.

Sam's heart was beating swiftly as he sat down. Conditioned responses, he thought a little wild-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ly. He'd started it off last night by defying Dorothy—and now, bit by bit, it was becoming easier. All he'd have to do was keep it up, see that he didn't lapse.

He sipped the coffee slowly, as if tasting his recent triumph in the black liquid.

"You'd better hurry," Dorothy said, looking at him a little uneasily.

Sam glanced at the wall clock and began gulping the hot liquid. Ten of eight! He'd have to hurry. He paused suddenly, the cup in mid-air, and wondered. Hurry to what? To those two wires and the tester and the endless stream of untested engines flowing toward him?

With an infinite firmness, Sam Meecham placed his cup on the saucer. "I'm not going in," he said.

Dorfothy looked at him as though he were crazy. "What do you mean, you're not going in?" she demanded. "Just because you've got some mulish notion in your head, do you think we have to starve. You're going in and liking it."

"The engine I bought is coming today," he said in a quiet voice. "I want to install it." In Sam Meecham's eyes there was a deadly fire that even his wife had not seen before. She gulped and backed away a little.

"But—"

"Call up the foreman," Sam said. "Tell him I'm sick. No, wait." He paused, smiling coldly. That would leave him an out; he could always go back to the job if he changed his mind. He said slowly, "Tell him I've quit."

"Sam!"

"Tell him I've quit," Sam insisted. That was the thing. Burn your bridges behind you so you can't turn back, so the only road is ahead.

Sam Meecham was going to the stars, and he would never return!

The atomic engine came that afternoon, neat and shiny, and sleek, with all the wires in their proper places, checked and double-checked by a sober human cog in the prison from which Sam Meecham had just escaped.

Sam busied himself in the hangar, lifting out the old engine and replacing it with the new one. Carefully, he settled it into its housing and bolted it down. Then he rearranged the wires into the pattern outlined on the sheet of paper.

Dorothy brought him coffee. That surprised him but he accepted it gratefully.

"Can—can I help you, Sam?" she offered.

He looked at her, perhaps a little disappointed that her face was serious. He said, "Sure you're not just trying to be nosey?"

A sharp pain darted into her eyes and she turned away.

"Wait," he said.

He called himself a fool. It was another of her tricks and he was falling for it. He put a re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

straining hand on her arm and remembered another time eight years ago when the touch would have sent electric thrills coursing through him. Oddly, he felt a small remnant of the pleasure stir within him.

"All right," he said gruffly. "All right, you can help."

So he was a fool. He'd been a fool before and chances were he'd be one again more often than he'd care to admit. In a short while hours perhaps, he'd be gone—and he'd never see Dorothy again. Somehow the thought was not as comforting as he had expected, and he tried to work off a lingering doubt that rose to plague him.

They worked through the afternoon, testing any weak parts the rocket might have, bracing the struts, checking for leaks. Sam found two space-suits in the locker. He'd better leave one, he thought. They were expensive and Dorothy might need one sometime. With him gone, she couldn't afford to throw money around. Yet he might need it more than she ever would. For a minute he stood undecided, and then he put them both in the locker.

Dorothy came into the room and smiled wearily at him. "It'll go any place now," she told him proudly.

In her eyes Sam saw an indefinable something. Something he might have seen eight years ago—but mixed with it was a sadness he had not known she could possess. Guiltily, he turned his gaze away.

"We—we'd better go in and eat," he said, looking at his watch without seeing it.

She didn't say anything, and that was odd. Sam wished she would nag and complain as she always had before. He wondered why he wished that, when only a short time before he had wanted just the opposite. It was with a start that he realized the reason. He was running away. That was it. He was running away, and he wanted to be deathly certain that he had good cause to run. Slowly the suspicion was creeping over him that the situation had changed slightly, was changing more.

He would leave tonight, he told himself, before he weakened enough to shelve his plans for another comfortable rut.

Sam's voice was a little hoarse. "What are you doing here? What do you want?" He had finished loading enough supplies aboard the rocket to last him months.

Dorothy came toward him from the darkness.

"It's no use," he said. "You can't talk me out of it this time."

But she only smiled sadly and said, "I know that, Sam. I came to say good-bye."

"Good-bye?"

"You're leaving, aren't you?"

"Yes." He looked at the ground, studying the darkness.

"I'm sorry, Sam," she said. "We started out wrong. Maybe, if we tried again—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But Sam said quickly, "No. I'm sorry too, but people don't change."

The remark startled him. He had used it occasionally to rationalize his position, had been convinced of its undeniable truth—yet suddenly he realized that he himself was its living denial. People *could* change, just as he had changed, just as Dorothy could change. It had been partly his fault when he first gave in to something he didn't want to do, and then to something else, and something else after that. He had helped dig the rut in which he had found himself, taking it for granted just as Dorothy had taken it for granted.

Her hair was soft in the same moonlight that had shone eight years before, and Sam Meecham felt a desire that had been too long unfulfilled.

"Dorothy, I—"

He hesitated. The decision came hard to him, for much of his life had been devoted to giving in to the decisions of others. This was the moment he had been waiting for, and now at the last moment he was uncertain.

He said suddenly, "Can you pack a few things?"

"Sam—" Her voice in the darkness was eager. Her hands touched his. Soft hands.

"You'd better hurry," he told her.

Sam watched her go to the house, and doubts began to gnaw at him. Was he going to destroy his plans now at a whim? He felt an impulse to get into the rocket and leave without her—yet he thought of the cold emptiness of space and himself drifting through alien worlds, alone, lonely. Perhaps it was wrong but he couldn't condemn her for something that was partly his fault. He was trying to become the person he once might have been, and it was only fair that she should have the same chance.

Dorothy came hurrying back, a suitcase in her hand, and there was an eagerness about her that pleased him. He helped her put the suitcase on board.

"Dorothy—"

Her voice was soft and low. "Yes, Sam?" Starlight danced in her eyes.

He pulled her gently to him. He kissed her, and that night eight years ago came back, and in his arms was the young eager bride he had known, the one he loved.

Minutes later they rose on wings of fire, in a slow upward spiral that quickened painlessly. Sam had not questioned the hyperdrive. It had worked in the factory and it would work here. He watched the needle cross the dial in a swift, steady movement.

Dorothy placed her hand in his. "Where are we going, darling?"

Sam Meecham smiled at her, confident that he had made the most important decision in his life. He pointed through the forward window.

Ahead of them lay the stars.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

texas week

by . . . Albert Hernhuter

Meeting the little man who isn't there is rated an horrendous experience. But discovery that the man *is* there may be even worse.

THE SLICK black car sped along the wide and straight street. It came to a smooth stop in front of a clean white house. A man got out of the car and walked briskly to the door. Reaching out with a pink hand, he pressed the doorbell with one well-manicured finger.

The door was answered by a housewife. She was wearing a white blouse, a green skirt and a green apron trimmed with white. Her feet were tucked into orange slippers, her blonde hair was done up in a neat bun. She was dressed as the government had ordered for that week.

The man said, "You are Mrs. Christopher Nest?"

There was a trace of anxiety in her voice as she answered. "Yes. And you are . . . ?"

"My name is Maxwell Hanstark. As you may already know, I am the official psychiatrist for this district. My appointment will last until the end of this year."

Mrs. Nest invited him in. They stepped into a clean living-room. At one end was the television set, at the other end were several chairs. There was nothing between the set and the chairs except a large grey rug which

One of the chief purposes of psychiatry is to separate fantasy from reality. It is reasonable to expect that future psychiatrists will know more about this borderline than the most learned doctors of today. Yet now and again even the best of them may encounter situations that defy all logic.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stretched from wall to wall. They walked to the chairs and sat down.

"Now, just what is the matter with your husband, Mrs. Nest?"

Mrs. Nest reached into a large bowl and absently picked up a piece of stale popcorn. She daintily placed it in her mouth and chewed thoughtfully before she answered.

"I wish I knew. All he does all day long is sit in the backyard and stare at the grass. He insists that he is standing on top of a cliff."

Hanstark took out a small pad and a short ball-point pen. He wrote something down before he spoke again. "Is he violent? Did he get angry when you told him there was no cliff?"

Mrs. Nest was silent for a moment. A second piece of popcorn joined the first. Hanstark's pen was poised above the pad. "No. He didn't get violent."

Hanstark wrote as he asked the next question. "Just what *was* his reaction?"

"He said *I* must be crazy."

"Were those his exact words?"

"No. He said that I was"—She thought for a moment—"loco. Yes, that was the word."

"Loco?"

"Yes. He said it just like those cowboys on the television."

Hanstark looked puzzled. "Perhaps you had better tell me more about this. When did he first start acting this way?"

Mrs. Nest glanced up at the television set, then back at Hanstark. "It was right after Texas Week. You remember — they showed all of those old cowboy pictures."

Hanstark nodded.

"Well, he stayed up every night watching them. Some nights he didn't even go to sleep. Even after the set was off, he sat in one of the chairs, just staring at the screen. This morning, when I got up, he wasn't in the house. I looked all over but I couldn't find him. I was just about ready to phone the police when I glanced out the window into the backyard. And I saw him."

"What was he doing?"

"He was just sitting there in the middle of the yard, staring. I went out and tried to bring him into the house. He told me he had to watch for someone. When I asked him what he was talking about he told me that I was crazy. That was when I phoned you, Mr. Hanstark."

"A very wise move, Mrs. Nest. And would you show me where your husband is right now?"

She nodded her head and they both got up from the chairs. They walked through the dining-room and kitchen. On the back porch Hanstark came to a halt.

"You'd better stay here, Mrs. Nest." He walked to the door and opened it.

"Mr. Hanstark," Mrs. Nest called.

Hanstark turned and saw her standing next to the automatic washing machine. "Yes?"

"Please be careful."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hanstark smiled. "I shall be, Mrs. Nest."

He walked out the door and down three concrete steps. Looking a little to his right, he saw a man squatted on his heels. He walked up to the man. "You are Mr. Christopher Nest?"

The man looked up and stared for a moment at Hanstark. "Yep," he answered. Then he turned and stared at the grass again.

"And may I ask you what you are doing?"

Nest answered without looking up. "Guardin' the pass."

Hanstark scribbled something in his notebook. "And why are you guarding the pass?"

Nest rose to his feet and stared down at Hanstark. "Just what are you askin' all of these questions for, stranger?"

Hanstark saw Nest was bigger than he and decided to play along for awhile. After all, strategy . . .

"I'm just interested in your welfare, Mr. Nest."

Nest shrugged his shoulders. He reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out a sack of tobacco and some paper. Holding a piece of paper in one hand, he carefully poured a little tobacco onto it. In one quick movement he rolled the paper and tobacco into a perfect cylinder.

He put the sack of tobacco and paper back into his pocket and took out a wooden kitchen match. He scraped it to life on the sole of his shoe and applied the flame to the tip of the cigarette. He puffed it into life and threw the match away. It burned for a few moments in the moist grass, then went out. A thin trail of smoke rose from it, and then was gone.

"Why are you guarding the pass?" Hanstark asked again.

Nest resumed his crouch on the grass. "News is around that Dirty Dan the cattle rustler is gonna try to steal some of my cattle." He patted an imaginary holster at his side. "And I aim to stop him."

Hanstark thought for a moment. Strategy—he must use strategy . . . "Mr. Nest." He waited until Nest had turned to him. "Mr. Nest. What would you say if I told you that there was no pass down there."

"Why shucks, pardner. I'd say you'd been chewin' some loco weed."

"And if I could prove it?"

Nest answered after a moment's pause. "Why then, I guess *I'd* be loco."

Hanstark thought it was going to be easy. "Mr. Nest, it is a well known fact that no one can walk in mid-air. Is that not true?"

Nest took a deep drag on his cigarette and blew the smoke out of his nostrils. "Shore."

"Then if I were to walk out above your pass you'd have to admit there is no pass."

"Reckon so."

Hanstark began to walk in the direction of Nest's "cliff." Nest jumped to his feet and grabbed

Please turn to page 149

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the man the martians made

by . . . Frank Belknap Long

No mortal had ever seen the Martians, but they had heard their whisperings—without knowing the terrible secret they kept hidden.

THERE WAS DEATH in the camp.

I knew when I awoke that it had come to stand with us in the night and was waiting now for the day to break and flood the desert with light. There was a prickling at the base of my scalp and I was drenched with cold sweat.

I had an impulse to leap up and go stumbling about in the darkness. But I disciplined myself. I crossed my arms and waited for the sky to grow bright.

Daybreak on Mars is like nothing you've ever dreamed about. You wake up in the morning, and there it is—bright and clear and shining. You pinch yourself, you sit up straight, but it doesn't vanish.

Then you stare at your hands with the big callouses. You reach for a mirror to take a look at your face. That's not so good. That's where ugliness enters the picture. You look around and you see Ralph. You see Harry. You see the women.

On Earth a woman may not look her glamorous best in the harsh light of early dawn, but if she's really beautiful she doesn't look too bad. On Mars even the most beautiful woman looks angry

If Frank Belknap Long is not one of the deans of science fiction writers, there can certainly be no dispute that he is high on the faculty board. His pen is indefatigable, it seems, and his characters come alive as with few other writers. We're sure you'll like this new suspenseful tale of his.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on arising, too weary and tormented by human shortcomings to take a prefabricated metal shack and turn it into a real home for a man.

You have to make allowances for a lot of things on Mars. You have to start right off by accepting hardship and privation as your daily lot. You have to get accustomed to living in construction camps in the desert, with the red dust making you feel all hollow and dried up inside. Making you feel like a drum, a shriveled pea pod, a salted fish hung up to dry. Dust inside of you, rattling around, canal water seepage rotting the soles of your boots.

So you wake up and you stare. The night before you'd collected driftwood and stacked it by the fire. The driftwood has disappeared. Someone has stolen your very precious driftwood. The Martians? Guess again.

You get up and you walk straight up to Ralph with your shoulders squared. You say, "Ralph, why in hell did you have to steal my driftwood?"

In your mind you say that. You say it to Dick, you say it to Harry. But what you really say is, "Larsen was here again last night!"

You say, I put a fish on to boil and Larsen ate it. I had a nice deck of cards, all shiny and new, and Larsen marked them up. It wasn't me cheating. It was Larsen hoping I'd win so that he could waylay me in the desert and get all of the money away from me.

You have a girl. There aren't too many girls in the camps with laughter and light and fire in them. But there are a few, and if you're lucky you take a fancy to one particular girl—her full red lips and her spun gold hair. All of a sudden she disappears. Somebody runs off with her. It's Larsen.

In every man there is a slumbering giant. When life roars about you on a world that's rugged and new you've got to go on respecting the lads who have thrown in their lot with you, even when their impulses are as harsh as the glint of sunlight on a desert-polished tombstone.

You think of a name—Larsen. You start from scratch and you build Larsen up until you have a clear picture of him in your mind. You build him up until he's a great shouting, brawling, golden man like Paul Bunyon.

Even a wicked legend can seem golden on Mars. Larsen wasn't just my slumbering giant—or Dick's, or Harry's. He was the slumbering giant in all of us, and that's what made him so tremendous. Anything gigantic has beauty and power and drive to it.

Alone we couldn't do anything with Larsen's gusto, so when some great act of wickedness was done with gusto how could it be us? Here comes Larsen! He'll shoulder all the guilt, but he won't feel guilty because he's the first man in Eden, the child who never

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grew up, the laughing boy, Hercules balancing the world on his shoulders and looking for a woman with long shining tresses and eyes like the stars of heaven to bend to his will.

If such a woman came to life in Hercules' arms would you like the job of stopping him from sending the world crashing? Would you care to try?

Don't you see? Larsen was closer to us than breathing and as necessary as food and drink and our dreams of a brigther tomorrow. Don't think we didn't hate him at times. Don't think we didn't curse and revile him. You may glorify a legend from here to eternity, but the luster never remains completely untarnished.

Larsen wouldn't have seemed completely real to us if we hadn't given him muscles that could tire and eyes that could blink shut in weariness. Larsen had to sleep, just as we did. He'd disappear for days.

We'd wink and say, "Larsen's getting a good long rest this time. But he'll be back with something new up his sleeve, don't you worry!"

We could joke about it, sure. When Larsen stole or cheated we could pretend we were playing a game with loaded dice—not really a deadly game, but a game full of sound and fury with a great rousing outburst of merriment at the end of it.

But there are deadlier games by far. I lay motionless, my arms locked across my chest, sweating from every pore. I stared at Harry. We'd been working all night digging a well, and in a few days water would be bubbling up sweet and cool and we wouldn't have to go to the canal to fill our cooking utensils. Harry was blinking and stirring and I could tell just by looking at him that he was uneasy too. I looked beyond him at the circle of shacks.

Most of us were sleeping in the open, but there were a few youngsters in the shacks and women too worn out with drudgery to care much whether they slept in smothering darkness or under the clear cold light of the stars.

I got slowly to my knees, scooped up a handful of sand, and let it dribble slowly through my fingers. Harry looked straight at me and his eyes widened in alarm. It must have been the look on my face. He arose and crossed to where I was sitting, his mouth twitching slightly. There was nothing very reassuring about Harry. Life had not been kind to him and he had resigned himself to accepting the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune without protest. He had one of those emaciated, almost skull-like faces which terrify children, and make women want to cry.

"You don't look well, Tom," he said. "You've been driving yourself too hard."

I looked away quickly. I had to tell him, but anything terrify-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing could demoralize Harry and make him throw his arm before his face in blind panic. But I couldn't keep it locked up inside me an instant longer.

"Sit down, Harry," I whispered. "I want to talk to you. No sense in waking the others."

"Oh," he said.

He squatted beside me on the sand, his eyes searching my face. "What is it, Tom?"

"I heard a scream," I said. "It was pretty awful. Somebody has been hurt—bad. It woke me up, and that takes some doing."

Harry nodded. "You sleep like a log," he said.

"I just lay still and listened," I said, "with my eyes wide open. Something moved out from the well—a two-legged something. It didn't make a sound. It was big, Harry, and it seemed to melt into the shadows. I don't know what kept me from leaping up and going after it. It had something to do with the way I felt. All frozen up inside."

Harry appeared to understand. He nodded, his eyes darting toward the well. "How long ago was that?"

"Ten—fifteen minutes."

"You just waited for me to wake up?"

"That's right," I said. "There was something about the scream that made me want to put off finding out. Two's company—and when you're alone with something like that it's best to talk it over before you act."

I could see that Harry was pleased. Unnerved too, and horribly shaken. But he was pleased that I had turned to him as a friend I could trust. When you can't depend on life for anything else it's good to know you have a friend.

I brushed sand from my trousers and got up. "Come on," I said. "We'll take a look."

It was an ordeal for him. His face twitched and his eyes wavered. He knew I hadn't lied about the scream. If a single scream could unnerve me that much it had to be bad.

We walked to the well in complete silence. There were shadows everywhere, chill and forbidding. Almost like people they seemed, whispering together, huddling close in ominous gossipy silence, aware of what we would find.

It was a sixty-foot walk from the fire to the well. A walk in the sun—a walk in the bright hot sun of Mars, with utter horror perhaps at the end of it.

The horror was there. Harry made a little choking noise deep in his throat, and my heart started pounding like a bass drum.

II

The man on the sand had no top to his head. His skull had been crushed and flattened so hideously that he seemed like a wooden figure resting there—an anatomical dummy with its skull-case lifted off.

We looked around for the skull-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

case, hoping we'd find it, hoping we'd made a mistake and stumbled by accident into an open-air dissecting laboratory and were looking at ghastly props made of plastic and glittering metal instead of bone and muscle and flesh.

But the man on the sand had a name. We'd known him for weeks and talked to him. He wasn't a medical dummy, but a corpse. His limbs were hideously convulsed, his eyes wide and staring. The sand beneath his head was clotted with dried blood. We looked for the weapon which had crushed his skull but couldn't find it.

We looked for the weapon before we saw the footprints in the sand. Big they were—incredibly large and massive. A man with a size twelve shoe might have left such prints if the leather had become a little soggy and spread out around the soles.

"The poor guy," Harry whispered.

I knew how he felt. We had all liked Ned. A harmless little guy with a great love of solitude, a guy who hadn't a malicious hair in his head. A happy little guy who liked to sing and dance in the light of a high-leaping fire. He had a banjo and was good at music making. Who could have hated Ned with a rage so primitive and savage? I looked at Harry and saw that he was wondering the same thing.

Harry looked pretty bad, about ready to cave in. He was leaning against the well, a tormented fury in his eyes.

"The murderous bastard," he muttered. "I'd like to get him by the throat and choke the breath out of him. Who'd want to do a thing like that to Ned."

"I can't figure it either," I said.

Then I remembered. I don't think Molly Egan really could have loved Ned. The curious thing about it was that Ned didn't even need the kind of love she could have given him. He was a self-sufficient little guy despite his frailness and didn't really need a woman to look after him. But Molly must have seen something pathetic in him.

Molly was a beautiful woman in her own right, and there wasn't a man in the camp who hadn't envied Ned. It was puzzling, but it could have explained why Ned was lying slumped on the sand with a bashed-in skull. It could have explained why someone had hated him enough to kill him.

Without lifting a finger Ned had won Molly's love. That could make some other guy as mad as a caged hyena—the wrong sort of other guy. Even a small man could have shattered Ned's skull, but the prints on the sand were big.

How many men in the camp wore size-twelve shoes? That was the sixty-four dollar question, and it hung in the shimmering air between Harry and myself like an unspoken challenge. We could almost see the curve of the big

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

question mark suspended in the dazzle.

I thought awhile, looking at Harry. Then I took a long, deep breath and said, "We'd better talk it over with Bill Seaton first. If it gets around too fast those footprints will be trampled flat. And if tempers start rising anything could happen."

Harry nodded. Bill was the kind of guy you could depend on in an emergency. Cool, poised, efficient, with an air of authority that commanded respect. He could be pigheaded at times, but his sense of justice was as keen as a whip.

Harry and I walked very quietly across a stretch of tumbled sand and halted at the door to Bill's shack. Bill was a bachelor and we knew there'd be no woman inside to put her foot down and tell him he'd be a fool to act as a lawman. Or would there be? We had to chance it.

Law-enforcement is a thankless job whether on Earth or on Mars. That's why it attracts the worst—and the best. If you're a power-drunk sadist you'll take the job just for the pleasure it gives you. But if you're really interested in keeping violence within bounds so that fairly decent lads get a fighting chance to build for the future you'll take the job with no thought of reward beyond the simple satisfaction of lending a helping hand.

Bill Seaton was such a man, even if he did enjoy the limelight and liked to be in a position of command.

"Come on, Harry," I said. "We may as well wake him up and get it over with."

We went into the shack. Bill was sleeping on the floor with his long legs drawn up. His mouth was open and he was snoring lustily. I couldn't help thinking how much he looked like an overgrown grasshopper. But that was just a first impression springing from overwrought nerves.

I bent down and shook Bill awake. I grabbed his arm and shook him until his jaw snapped shut and he shot up straight, suddenly galvanized. Instantly the grotesque aspect fell from him. Dignity came upon him and enveloped him like a cloak.

"Ned, you say? The poor little cuss! So help me—if I get my hands on the rat who did it I'll roast him over a slow fire!"

He got up, staggered to an equipment locker, and took out a sun helmet and a pair of shorts. He dressed quickly, swearing constantly and staring out the door at the bright dawn glow as if he wanted to send both of his fists crashing into the first suspicious guy to cross his path.

"We can't have those footprints trampled," he muttered. "There are a lot of dumb bastards here who don't know the first thing about keeping pointers intact. Those prints may be the only thing we'll have to go on."

"Just the three of us can handle

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it, Bill," I said. "When you decide what should be done we can wake the others."

Bill nodded. "Keeping it quiet is the important thing. We'll carry him back here. When we break the news I want that body out of sight."

Harry and Bill and I—we took another walk in the sun. I looked at Harry, and the greenish tinge which had crept into his face gave me a jolt. He's taking this pretty hard, I thought. If I hadn't known him so well I might have jumped to an ugly conclusion. But I just couldn't imagine Harry quarreling with Ned over Molly.

How was I taking it myself? I raised my hand and looked at it. There was no tremor. Nerves steady, brain clear. No pleasure in enforcing the law—pass that buck to Bill. But there was a gruesome job ahead, and I was standing up to it as well as could be expected.

Ever try lifting a corpse? The corpse of a stranger is easier to lift than the corpse of a man you've known and liked. Harry and I lifted him together. Between us the dead weight didn't seem too intolerable—not at first. But it quickly became a terrible, heavy limpness that dragged at our arms like some soggy log dredged up from the dark waters of the canal.

We carried him into the shack and eased him down on the floor. His head fell back and his eyes lolled.

Death is always shameful. It strips away all human reticences and makes a mockery of human dignity and man's rebellion against the cruelty of fate.

For a moment we stood staring down at all that was left of Ned. I looked at Bill. "How many men in the camp wear number twelve shoes?"

"We'll find out soon enough."

All this time we hadn't mentioned Larsen. Not one word about Larsen, not one spoken word. Cheating, yes. Lying, and treacherous disloyalty, and viciousness, and spite. Fights around the campfires at midnight, battered faces and broken wrists and a cursing that never ceased. All that we could blame on Larsen. But a harmless little guy lying dead by a well in a spreading pool of blood—that was an outrage that stopped us dead in our legend-making tracks.

There is something in the human mind which recoils from too outrageous a deception. How wonderful it would have been to say, "Larsen was here again last night. He found a little guy who had never harmed anyone standing by a well in the moonlight. Just for sheer delight he decided to kill the little guy right then and there." Just to add luster to the legend, just to send a thrill of excitement about the camp.

No, that would have been the lie colossal which no sane man could have quite believed.

Something happened then to further unnerve us.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The most disturbing sound you can hear on Mars is the whispering. Usually it begins as a barely audible murmur and swells in volume with every shift of the wind. But now it started off high pitched and insistent and did not stop.

It was the whispering of a dying race. The Martians are as elusive as elves and all the pitiless logic of science had failed to draw them forth into the sunlight to stand before men in uncompromising arrogance as peers of the human race.

That failure was a tragedy in itself. If man's supremacy is to be challenged at all let it be by a creature of flesh-and-blood, a big-brained biped who must kill to live. Better that by far than a ghostly flickering in the deepening dusk, a whispering and a flapping and a long-drawn sighing prophesying death.

Oh, the Martians were real enough. A flitting vampire bat is real, or a stinging ray in the depths of a blue lagoon. But who could point to a Martian and say, "I have seen you plain, in broad daylight. I have looked into your owlish eyes and watched you go flitting over the sand on your thin, stalklike legs? I know there is nothing mysterious about you. You are like a water insect skimming the surface of a pond in a familiar meadow on Earth. You are quick and alert, but no match for a man. You are no more than an interesting insect."

Who could say that, when there were ruins buried deep beneath the sand to give the lie to any such idea. First the ruins, and then the Martians themselves, always elusive, gnomelike, goblinlike, flitting away into the dissolving dusk.

You're a comparative archaeologist and you're on Mars with the first batch of rugged youngsters to come tumbling out of a spaceship with stardust in their eyes. You see those youngsters digging wells and sweating in the desert. You see the prefabricated housing units go up, the tangle of machinery, the camp sites growing lusty with midnight brawls and skull-cracking escapades. You see the towns in the desert, the law-enforcement committees, the camp followers, the reform fanatics.

You're a sober-minded scholar, so you start digging in the ruins. You bring up odd-looking cylinders, rolls of threaded film, instruments of science so complex they make you giddy.

You wonder about the Martians —what they were like when they were a young and proud race. If you're an archaeologist you wonder. But Bill and I—we were youngsters still. Oh, sure, we were in our thirties, but who would have suspected that? Bill looked twenty-seven and I hadn't a gray hair in my head.

III

Bill nodded at Harry. "You'd better stay here. Tom and I will

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be asking some pointed questions, and our first move will depend on the answers we get. Don't let anyone come snooping around this shack. If anyone sticks his head in and starts to turn ugly, warn him just once—then shoot to kill." He handed Harry a gun.

Harry nodded grimly and settled himself on the floor close to Ned. For the first time since I'd known him, Harry looked completely sure of himself.

As we emerged from the shack the whispering was so loud the entire camp had been placed on the alert. There would be no need for us to go into shack after shack, watching surprise and shock come into their eyes.

A dozen or more men were between Bill's shack and the well. They were staring grimly at the dawn, as if they could already see blood on the sky, spilling over on the sand and spreading out in a sinister pool at their feet. A mirage-like pool mirroring their own hidden forebodings, mirroring a knotted rope and the straining shoulders of men too vengeful to know the meaning of restraint.

Jim Kenny stood apart and alone, about forty feet from the well, staring straight at us. His shirt was open at the throat, exposing a patch of hairy chest, and his big hands were wedged deeply into his belt. He stood about six feet three, very powerful, and with large feet.

I nudged Bill's arm. "What do you think?" I asked.

Kenny did seem a likely suspect. Molly had caught his eye right from the start, and he had lost no time in pursuing her. A guy like Kenny would have felt that losing out to a man of his own breed would have been a terrible blow to his pride. But just imagine Kenny losing out to a little guy like Ned. It would have infuriated him and glazed his eyes with a red film of hate.

Bill answered my question slowly, his eyes on Kenny's cropped head. "I think we'd better take a look at his shoes," he said.

We edged up slowly, taking care not to disturb the others, pretending we were sauntering toward the well on a before-breakfast stroll.

It was then that Molly came out of her shack. She stood blinking for an instant in the dawn glare, her unbound hair falling in a tumbled dark mass to her shoulders, her eyes still drowsy with sleep. She wore rust colored slippers and a form-fitted yellow robe, belted in at the waist.

Molly wasn't beautiful exactly. But there was something pulse-stirring about her and it was easy to understand how a man like Kenny might find her difficult to resist.

Bill slanted a glance at Kenny, then shrugged and looked straight at Molly. He turned to me, his voice almost a whisper, "She's got to be told, Tom. You do it. She likes you a lot."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I'd been wondering about that myself—just how much she liked me. It was hard to be sure.

Bill saw my hesitation, and frowned. "You can tell if she's covering up. Her reaction may give us a lead."

Molly looked startled when she saw me approaching without the mask I usually wore when I waltzed her around and grinned and ruffled her hair and told her that she was the cutest kid imaginable and would make some man—not me—a fine wife.

That made telling her all the harder. The hardest part was at the end—when she stared at me dry-eyed and threw her arms around me as if I was the last support left to her on Earth.

For a moment I almost forgot we were not on Earth. On Earth I might have been able to comfort her in a completely sane way. But on Mars when a woman comes into your arms your emotions can turn molten in a matter of seconds.

"Steady," I whispered. "We're just good friends, remember?"

"I'd be willing to forget, Tom," she said.

"You've had a terrible shock," I whispered. "You really loved that little guy—more than you know. It's natural enough that you should feel a certain warmth toward me. I just hapened to be here—so you kissed me."

"No, Tom. It isn't that way at all—"

I might have let myself go a little then if Kenny hadn't seen us. He stood very still for an instant, staring at Molly. Then his eyes narrowed and he walked slowly toward us, his hands still wedged in his belt.

I looked quickly at Molly, and saw that her features had hardened. There was a look of dark suspicion in her eyes. Bill had been watching Kenny, too, waiting for him to move. He measured footsteps with Kenny, advancing in the same direction from a different angle at a pace so calculated that they seemed to meet by accident directly in front of us.

Bill didn't draw but his hand never left his hip. His voice came clear and sharp and edged with cold insistence. "Know anything about it, Kenny?"

Strain seemed to tighten Kenny's face, but there was no panic in his eyes, no actual glint of fear. "What made you think I'd know?" he asked.

Bill didn't say a word. He just started staring at Kenny's shoes. He stood back a bit and continued to stare as if something vitally important had escaped him and taken refuge beneath the soggy leather around Kenny's feet.

"What size shoes do you wear, Jim?" he asked.

Kenny must have suspected that the question was charged with as much explosive risk as a detonating wire set to go off at the faintest jar. His eyes grew shrewd and mocking.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"So the guy who did it left prints in the sand?" he said. "Prints made by big shoes?"

"That's right," Bill said. "You have a very active mind."

Kenny laughed then, the mockery deepening in his stare. "Well," he said, "suppose we have a look at those prints, and if it will ease your mind I'll take off my shoes and you can try them out for size."

Kenny and Bill and I walked slowly from Molly's shack to the well in the hot and blazing glare, and the whispering went right on, getting under our skin in a tormenting sort of way.

Kenny still wore that disturbing grin. He looked at the prints and grunted. "Yeah," he said "they sure are big. Biggest prints I've ever seen."

He sat down and started unlacing his shoes. First the right shoe, then the left. He pulled off both shoes and handed them to Bill.

"Fit them in," he said. "Measure them for size. Measure *me* for size, and to hell with you!"

Bill made a careful check. There were eight prints, and he fitted the shoes painstakingly into each of them. There was space to spare at each try.

It cleared Kenny completely. He wasn't a killer—this time. We might have roused the camp to a lynching fury and Kenny would have died for a crime another man had committed. I shut my eyes and saw Larsen swinging from a roof top, a black hood over his face. I saw Molly standing in the sunlight by my side, her face a stony mask.

I opened my eyes and there was Kenny, grinning contemptuously at us. He'd called our bluff and won out. Now the shoe was on the other foot.

A cold chill ran up my spine. It was Kenny who was doing the staring now, and he was looking directly at my shoes. He stood back a bit and continued to stare. He was dramatizing his sudden triumph in a way that turned my blood to ice.

Then I saw that Bill was staring too—straight at the shoes of a man he had known for three years and grown to like and trust. But underlying the warmth and friendliness in Bill was a granite-like integrity which nothing could shake.

It was Bill who spoke first. "I guess you'd better take them off, Tom," he said. "We may as well be thorough about this."

Sure, I was big. I grew up fast as a kid and at eighteen I weighed two hundred and thirty pounds, all lean flesh. If shoes ran large I could sometimes cram my feet into size twelves, but I felt much more comfortable in a size or two larger than that.

What made it worse, Molly liked me. I was involved with her, but no one knew how much. No one knew whether we'd quarreled or not, or how insanely jealous I could be. No one knew

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whether Molly had only pretended to like Ned while carrying a torch for me, and how dangerously complex the situation might have become all along the line.

I stood very still, listening. The whispering was so loud now it drowned out the sighing of the wind. I looked down at my shoes. They were caked with mud and soggy and discolored. Day after day I'd trudge back and forth from the canal to the shacks in the blazing sunlight without giving my feet a thought until the ache in them had become intolerable, rest an absolute necessity.

There was only one thing to do —call Kenny's bluff so fast he wouldn't have time to hurl another accusation at me.

I handed Bill both of my shoes. He looked at me and nodded. I waited, listening to the whispering rise and fall, watching him stoop and fit the shoes into the prints on the sand.

He straightened suddenly. His face was expressionless, but I could see that he was waging a terrible inward struggle with himself.

"Your shoes come pretty close to filling out those prints, Tom," he said. "I can't be sure—but a wax impression test should pretty well clear this up. He gripped my arm and nodded toward the shacks. "Better stick close to me."

Kenny took a slow step backward, his jaw tightening, his eyes searching Bill's face. "Wax impression test, hell!" he said. "You've got your murderer. I'm going to see he gets what's coming to him—right now!"

Bill shook his head. "I'll do this my way," he said.

Kenny glared at him, then laughed harshly. "You won't have a chance," he said. "The boys won't stand for it. I'm going to spread the word around, and you'd better not try to stop me."

That did it. I'd been holding myself in, but I had a sudden, overpowering urge to send my fist crashing into Kenny's face, to send him crashing to the sand. I started for him, but he jumped back and started shouting.

I can't remember exactly what he shouted. But he said just enough to put a noose around my neck. Every man and woman between the shacks and the well swung about to stare at me. I saw shock and rage flare in the eyes of men who usually had steady nerves. They were not calm now —not one of them.

IV

It all happened so fast I was caught off balance. In the harsh Martian sunlight human emotions can be as unstable as a wind-lashed dune.

A crazy thought flashed through my mind: Will Molly believe this too? Will she join these madmen in their wild thirst for vengeance? My need for her was suddenly overwhelming. Just seeing her face would have helped, but now more men had emerged from the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shacks and I couldn't see beyond them. They were heading straight for me and I knew that even Bill would be powerless to stop them.

You can't argue with an avalanche. It was rolling straight toward me, gathering momentum as it came—not one man or a dozen, but a solid wall of human hate and unreason.

Bill stood his ground. He had drawn his gun, and he started shouting that the prints couldn't have been made by my shoes. I chalked that up to his credit and resolved never to forget it.

I knew I'd have to make a dash for it. I ran as fast as I could, keeping my eyes on the glimmer of sunlight on rising dunes, and deep hollows which a carefully placed bullet could have quickly changed into a burial mound.

A sudden crackling burst of gunfire ripped through the air. Directly in my path the sand geysered up as the bullets ripped and tore at it. Somebody wasn't a good marksman, or had let blind rage unnerve him and spoil his aim. A lot of somebodies—for the firing increased and became almost continuous for an instant, a dull crackling which drowned out the whispering and the sighing of the wind.

Then abruptly all sound ceased. Utter stillness descended on the desert—an unnatural, terrifying stillness, as if nature herself had stopped breathing and was waiting for someone to scream.

I must have been mad to turn. A weaving target has a chance, but a target standing motionless is a sitting duck and his life hangs by a hair. But still I turned.

Something was happening between the well and the shacks which halted the pursuit dead in its tracks. One of the shacks was wrapped in darting tongues of flame, and a woman was screaming, and a man close to her was grappling with something huge and misshapen which loomed starkly against the dawn glow.

A human shape? I could not be sure. It seemed monstrous, with a bulge between its shoulders which gave a grotesque and distorted aspect to the shadow which its weaving bulk cast upon the sand. I could see the shadow clearly across three hundred feet of sand. It lengthened and shortened, as if an octopus-like ferocity had given it the power to distort itself at will, lengthening its tentacles and then whipping them back again.

But it was not an octopus. It had legs and arms, and it was crushing the man in a grip of steel. I could see that now. I stared as the others were staring, their backs turned to me, their blind hatred for me blotted out by that greater horror.

I suddenly realized that the shape was human. It had the head and shoulders of a man, and a torso that could twist with muscular purpose, and massive hands that could maul and maim. It threw the hapless man from it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with a sudden convulsive contraction of its entire bulk. I had never seen a human being move in quite that way, but even as its violence flared its manlike aspect became more pronounced.

A frightful thing happened then. The woman screamed and rushed toward the brutish maniac with her fingers splayed. The swaying figure bent, grabbed her about the waist, and lifted her high into the air. I thought for a moment he was about to crush her as he had crushed the man. But I was wrong. She was hurled to the sand, but with a violence so brutal that she went instantly limp.

Then the brutal madman turned, and I saw his face. If ever monstrous cruelty and malign cunning looked out of a human countenance it looked out of the eyes that stared in my direction, remorseless in their hate.

I could not tear my gaze from his face. The hate in it could be sensed, even across a blinding haze of sunlight that blotted out the sharp contours of physical things. But more than hate could be sensed. There was something tremendous about that face, as if the evil which had ravaged it had left the searing brand of Lucifer himself!

For an instant the madman stood motionless, his ghastly brutality unchallenged. Then Jeff Winters started for it. Jeff had come to Mars alone and grown more solitary with every passing day. He was a brooding, ingrown man, secretive and sullen, with a streak of wildness which he usually managed to control. He went for the madman like a gigantic terrier pup, shaggy and ferocious and contemptuous of death.

The big figure turned quickly, raised his arm, and brought his closed fist down on Jeff's skull. Jeff collapsed like a shattered plaster cast. His body seemed to break and splinter, and he sprawled forward on the sand.

He did not get up.

Frank Anders had guns on both hips, and he drew them fast. No one knew what kind of man Anders was. He hardly ever complained or made a spectacle of himself. A little guy with sandy hair and cold blue eyes, he had an accuracy of aim that did his talking for him.

His guns suddenly roared. For an instant the air between his hands and the maniac was a crackling wall of flame. The brute swayed a little but did not turn aside. He went straight for Anders with both arms spread wide.

He caught Anders about the waist, lifted him up, and slammed his body down against the sand. A sickness came over me as I stared. The madman bashed Ander's head against the ground again and again. Then suddenly the big arms relaxed and Anders sagged limply to the ground.

For an instant the madman swayed slowly back and forth, like a blood-stained marionette on a wire. Then he moved forward

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with a terrible, shambling gait, his head lowered, a dark, misshapen shadow seeming to lengthen before him on the sand like a spindle of flame.

The clearing was abruptly tumultuous with sound. The fury which had been unleased against me turned upon the monster and became a closed circle of deadly, intent purpose hemming him in—and he was caught in a crossfire that hurled him backwards to the sand.

He jumped up and lunged straight for the well. What happened then was like the awakening stages of some horrible dream. The madman shambled past the well, the air at his back a crackling sheet of flame. The barrage behind him was continuous and merciless. The men were organized now, standing together in a solid wall, firing with deadly accuracy and a grim purpose which transcended fear.

The madman went clumping on past me and climbed a dune with his shoulders held straight. With a sunset glare deepening about him, he went striding over the dune and out of sight.

I turned and stared back at the camp. The pursuit had passed the well and was headed for me. But no one paid the slightest attention to me. Twelve men passed me, walking three abreast. Bill came along in their wake, his eyes stony hard. He reached out as he passed me, gripping my shoulder, giving me a foot-of-the-gallows kind of smile.

"We know now who killed Ned," he whispered. "We know, fella. Take it easy, relax."

My head was throbbing, but I could see the big prints from where I stood—the prints of a murderer betrayed by his insatiable urge to slay.

I saw Kenny pass, and he gave me a contemptuous grin. He had done his best to destroy me, but there was no longer any hate left in me.

I took a slow step forward—and fell flat on my face. . . .

I woke up with my head in Molly's lap. She was looking down into my face, sobbing in a funny sort of way and running her fingers through my hair.

She looked startled when she saw that I was wide awake. She blinked furiously and started fumbling at her waist for a handkerchief.

"I must have passed out cold," I said. "It's quite a strain to be at the receiving end of a lynching bee. And what I saw afterwards wasn't exactly pleasant."

"Darling," she whispered, "don't move, don't say a word. You're going to be all right."

"You bet I am!" I said. "Right now I feel great."

My arm went around her shoulder, and I drew her head down until her breath was warm on my face. I kissed her hair and lips and eyes for a full minute in utter recklessness.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When I released her her eyes were shining, and she was laughing a little and crying too. "You've changed your mind," she said. "You believe me now, don't you?"

"Don't talk," I said. "Don't say another word. I just want to look at you."

"It was you right from the start," she said. "Not Ned—or anyone else."

"I was a blind fool," I said.

"You never gave me a second glance."

"One glance was enough," I whispered. "But when I saw how it seemed to be between you and Ned—"

"I was never in love with him. It was just—"

"Never mind, don't say it," I said. "It's over and done with."

I stopped, remembering. Her eyes grew wide and startled, and I could see that she was remembering too.

"What happened?" I asked. "Did they catch that vicious rat?"

She brushed back her hair, the sunlight suddenly harsh on her face. "He fell into the canal. The bullets brought him down, and he collapsed on the bank."

Her hand tightened on my wrist. "Bill told me. He tried to swim, but the current carried him under. He went down and never came up."

"I'm glad," I said. "Did anyone in the camp ever see him before?"

Molly shook her head. "Bill said he was a drifter—a dangerous maniac who must have been crazed by the sun."

"I see," I said.

I reached out and drew her into my arms again, and we rested for a moment stretched out side by side on the sand.

"It's funny," I said after a while.

"What is?"

"You know what they say about the whispering. Sometimes when you listen intently you seem to hear words deep in your mind. As if the Martians had telepathic powers."

"Perhaps they have," she said.

I glanced sideways at her. "Remember," I said. "There were cities on Mars when our ancestors were hairy apes. The Martian civilization was flourishing and great fifty million years before the pyramids arose as a monument to human solidarity and worth. A bad monument, built by slave labor. But at least it was a start."

"Now you're being poetic, Tom," she said.

"Perhaps I am. The Martians must have had their pyramids too. And at the pyramid stage they must have had their Larsens, to shoulder all the guilt. To them we may still be in the pyramid stage. Suppose—"

"Suppose what?"

"Suppose they wanted to warn us, to give us a lesson we couldn't forget. How can we say with certainty that a dying race couldn't still make use of certain tech-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

niques that are far beyond us.

"I'm afraid I don't understand," she said, puzzled.

"Someday," I said, "our own science will take a tiny fragment of human tissue from the body of a dead man, put it into an incubating machine, and a new man will arise again from that tiny shred of flesh. A man who can walk and live and breathe again, and love again, and die again after another full lifetime.

"Perhaps the Martian science was once as great as that. And the Martians might still remember a few of the techniques. Perhaps from our human brains, from our buried memories and desires, they could filch the key and bring to horrible life a thing so monstrous and so terrible—"

Her hand went suddenly cold in mine. "Tom, you can't honestly think—"

"No," I said. "It's nonsense, of course. Forget it."

I didn't tell her what the whispering had seemed to say, deep in my mind.

We've brought you Larsen! You wanted Larsen, and we've made him for you! His flesh and his mind—his cruel strength and his wicked heart! Here he comes, here he is! Larsen, Larsen, Larsen!

TEXAS WEEK (*Concluded from page 132*)

the official psychiatrist by the arm.

"What're you tryin' to do," Nest said angrily, "kill yourself?"

Hanstark shook free of his grasp. "Mr. Nest, I am not going to kill myself. I am merely going to walk in that direction." He pointed to where the cliff was supposed to be. "To you it will look as if I were walking in mid-air."

Nest dropped his hands to his sides. "Shucks, I don't care if you kill yourself. It's just that it's liable to make the cattle nervous."

Hanstark gave him a cold glare and began to walk. He took three paces and stopped. "You see, Mr. Nest. There is no cliff."

Nest looked at him and laughed. "You just take one more step and you'll find there *is* a cliff!"

Hanstark took another step—a long one. His face bore a surprised look as he disappeared beneath the grass. His screams could be heard for a moment before he landed on the rocks below.

Nest walked to the edge of the cliff and looked down at the mangled body. He took off his hat in respect. "Little feller had a lotta guts." Then he added, "Poor little feller."

He put his hat back on and looked down at the entrance to the valley. A horse and rider appeared from behind several rocks.

"Dirty Dan!" Nest exclaimed. He reached down and picked up his rifle.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be it ever thus

by . . Robert Moore Williams

The planet's natives were so similar to their conquerors that no one could tell them apart—except for their difference in thinking.

THIS WAS Graduation Day. The senior class from the Star Institute of Advanced Science was scheduled to go through the Museum of the Conquered and observe the remnants of the race that had once ruled this planet. There were many such museums maintained for the purpose of allowing the people to see the greatness their ancestors had displayed in conquering this world and also to demonstrate how thorough and how complete that conquest had been. Perhaps the museums had other reasons for existing, but the authorities did not reveal these reasons. Visiting such a museum was part of the exercises of every graduating class.

Billy Kasker arrived early, to take care of all last minute problems for Mr. Phipper, the instructor who would take the group through the museum, and to make certain that all of the members of the graduating class knew what they were supposed to do on the trip. Billy Kasker was class president. A handsome, husky youth, accommodating, generous, and thoughtful to a fault. He was well liked both by the faculty and the students. He was pleasant to everybody, even to Joe Buckner,

Men have fought and died for life and liberty since the beginning of time, and they will continue the fight until time finally comes to an end. Here is a thoroughly readable story about just such a situation—a story which could well be a forecast of the chilling future of your children and ours.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who called him "teacher's pet" and sneeringly remarked that he had been elected class president as a result of a superb job of boot-licking.

Even such remarks as these had not disturbed Bill Kasker. He still acted as if Joe Buckner was his best friend.

"Are we all here, Billy?" the instructor called.

"All here, sir," Billy Kasker answered.

"Very well. Let's start to the museum. As we go through you may ask any questions you wish. However, I must insist you stay close to me and not wander from the group. We will be in no danger, you understand—the creatures living in the museum have had their fangs pulled most effectively—but even so we must not take chances."

The instructor led off. He was a fussy little person in a shiny black coat and a soft hat that was too big for him. No matter how much paper he stuffed inside the brim, the hat never seemed to fit right. Peering through glasses that were always threatening to fall off, he moved away from the Star Institute toward the nearby museum. The class of eight girls and nine boys followed him.

"Why do we have to go through this old museum?" Joe Buckner complained. "We already know everything about it."

"It's the rule," Billy Kasker answered. "The faculty thinks we should see the situation at first hand. Then we will have a better understanding of it."

Joe Buckner grunted disdainfully. "You're always sucking in with the big shots and telling everybody what they say."

"You asked me. I tried to tell you." Billy Kasker's voice was still pleasant. If a slight glint appeared in his eyes, it remained there for only a second.

The museum was an open area many miles long. It was enclosed by a high, electrically charged fence along which guard towers were placed at regular intervals. There was only one gate, to which the instructor led the class. A captain, resplendent in a brilliant uniform, came out of the guard house to greet them.

"The graduating class from the Star Institute, eh? Good. We had notice that you were coming. Guard, bring Mr. Phipper a *Thor* gun, then open the gates." The last was spoken in a brisk tone to the guard who had followed the captain.

The *Thor* gun was brought immediately. It was a small weapon, with a belt and holster. The captain took it from the holster. Watching, Billy Kasker had the impression that the weapon was made of glittering, spun glass. It had a short, heavy barrel in which tiny instruments were visible. Billy Kasker watched very closely.

"Do you know how to use it?" the captain asked.

"Oh, yes," the instructor answered.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Is it so dangerous in there that we need a *Thor* gun?" Susan Sidwell said. Susan had majored in ionic chemistry and had graduated with high honors.

"No, it isn't dangerous at all," the instructor answered hastily. "The weapon is worn merely for the sake of tradition."

"No danger at all, young lady," the captain said. "Nothing to worry about. Not while you've got this, anyhow." He patted the *Thor* gun which the instructor was buckling to his waist.

The gates were open. The instructor in the lead, the group passed through. Billy Kasker brought up the rear. Joe Buckner was directly ahead of him.

They went first to see the wreckage of the city—shattered walls, tumbled buildings, streets with rubble still piled in them. Weeds and creeping vines grew over the broken bones of this city as if they were attempting to hide the ugly scars.

The instructor adjusted his voice to the proper tone. He had made this same speech to many graduating classes and he knew exactly what he was going to say.

"You understand, of course, that this part of the old city was almost completely destroyed in our attack of the year 4021 After Yevbro, or the year 1967, according to the way the natives reckoned time on this planet. This part of it has been allowed to remain the way our ships left it, as an example of the effectiveness of our weapons."

His voice gave the impression that he was personally participating in that attack and was enjoying the destruction that had taken place. He stood straight, squared his shoulders and breathed deeply.

"What happened to the natives who lived here?" Billy Kasker asked.

The instructor frowned. "Oh, they were killed." At first he was a little irritated at the question, then again satisfaction came back into his voice.

"They got what was coming to them for trying to resist our sky ships," Joe Buckner said.

"Oh, yes, they deserved their fate." The instructor hitched the *Thor* gun a little higher on his hip.

Billy Kasker was silent.

"We will go next to the fields, then to the factory section—such of as there is—then to that part of the city which we have allowed the natives to rebuild. Come."

The class moved out of the city. Here they saw their first natives. Clad mostly in rags—many of them bent and stooped, some of them showing the marks of hunger—they were a quiet people who kept strictly out of the way of the class group. But except for the clothing and the marks of hunger, they were identical in appearance with their conquerors.

"Why, they look just like us!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Joe Buckner said indignantly. He sounded outraged at the resemblance.

"There are many differences," the instructor said quickly. "Note their clothing, how poorly made it is. They make it themselves out of the wool of some kind of animal—deer, I believe, or bear."

"Sheep," Billy Kasker corrected.

"Oh, yes, sheep is the name of the animal. Thank you, Billy."

"You're welcome, sir."

"But they oughtn't to look like *us!*" Joe Buckner continued.

"There are chemical differences," Susan Sidwell said. "Once, in the laboratory, we analyzed their blood. The color was different for one thing. They also have a much different metabolism."

"But suppose one of them escaped from the museum and got into our part of the world. How would we know he wasn't one of us, if he put on our clothes?" Joe Buckner sounded outraged.

"That is one purpose our bracelets serve," the instructor answered. "A very good question, Joe. As you know, each of us receives a bracelet at birth, which is slipped over the hand and onto the wrist. Made of *plasticum,* which cannot be cut by any method, the bracelet has the unique property of expanding in size as the wearer grows. It cannot be removed except by cutting off the arm of the wearer." He laughed as if he had made a good joke. "But I am sure no one would ever think of doing that. The bracelet carries the serial number assigned to each of us."

He held up his arm, exhibiting the gleaming circle of *plasticum* on his wrist. To him—to all of them—it was a badge of honor, a mark that proved one belonged to a superior race. "If one of the natives escaped, the absence of a bracelet would disclose his identity at once. We would take measures to have him eliminated."

"I see," Joe Buckner said. He sounded mollified. "How would we eliminate him?"

"I believe it is customary to use a *Thor* gun in such cases—a large caliber which will disintegrate him instantly. The model I have will only blast a hole a few inches in diameter."

"I'm going to be a *Thorgunman,*" Joe Buckner said with sudden enthusiasm.

"Good!" the instructor said. "That is a very fine calling. If I had my life to live over again—" He sighed for lost opportunities.

At the announcement of his ambition, Joe Buckner rose higher in the opinion of the class.

"Observe how they make their living," the instructor continued.

The class saw the natives at work tilling the soil. The technique used here was very crude but mildly interesting. They used plows and harrows for loosening the soil, devices that were pulled by large animals.

"*Horses,* I believe they call the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

animals. Of course, we don't allow them to have power-drawn equipment."

"It's not at all like the way we obtain our food," Billy Kasker said thoughtfully.

"Oh, no," the instructor answered. "We synthesize our foods. As a matter of fact, they are *required* to grow their food. That way, they have to spend so much time finding something to eat that they can't cause trouble." He grinned as if something in the idea pleased him.

"Serves them right," Joe Buckner said.

The natives working in the fields seemed not to see the class. When the group came near, they stopped talking and worked harder.

"Scared to talk when we're around," Joe Buckner said. "They're yellow!"

"Now for the factory section," the instructor said.

The factories were small and unimpressive. Working here with very crude tools and with no power equipment, the natives were making farm machinery.

"Why don't we give them better tools?" Billy Kasker asked.

"What have they got coming?" Joe Buckner exclaimed. "They lost, didn't they?"

"Yes, but—"

"If you had your way you'd be sucking in and helping the side that lost. Pretty soon you'd discover *you* had lost!"

"Hardly that," Billy Kasker replied. "But it seems more human—"

"*Human?* That's a laugh!" Joe Buckner slapped his thighs and roared with laughter.

"Come along," the instructor said.

"Look—there are children playing games!" Susan Sidwell observed. "Horrible looking little brats, aren't they?" She pointed to a group of brown-skinned youngsters playing some kind of a game that involved a ball and a club. One threw the ball, the second struck at it with the club.

"What a stupid way to play," Joe Buckner said.

As soon as the young natives saw the graduating group coming, they stopped their game and ran away. They seemed very frightened.

"The young ones fear us," the instructor explained. "The older ones fear us too, but they don't show it so much." He watched the fleeing youngsters with every evidence of great inward satisfaction.

Billy Kasker's lips closed in a thin straight line.

"Now we will go to the rebuilt section."

They walked on.

"One of the natives is following us," Susan Sidwell suddenly said.

Turning, the group saw that a member of the conquered race was coming along the street behind them. He was dressed all in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brown—his hat, his shirt, his pants.

The instructor put his hand on the butt of the *Thor* gun.

The native walked past the group without seeming to see it. He was whistling between his teeth. He walked on ahead of them, turned down an alley, and disappeared. The instructor took his hand off the *Thor* gun.

"He wasn't really following us; he wouldn't dare. Does anybody have any questions?" He looked brightly around the group.

"Yes, I have," Joe Buckner said. "Why don't we just kill all of these natives? They're not any good to us."

The instructor smiled slyly. "I'll tell you a little secret about that. It's awfully hard to kill *all* of any race. No matter how thoroughly you do the job, a few always manage to escape. Then they breed and increase in spite of everything you do.

"After we had conquered this planet we had trouble catching all of the natives. They were the most cantankerous, persistent race you can imagine. So these museums were set up, to lure them in here. We announced that these places would be set aside and that they would not be bothered as long as they remained in the museums. All in all, we made the museums rather attractive places, hoping that—"

"I see the plan!" Joe Buckner said glowingly. "After you got them all into the museums—*blooie!*—knock all of them off at once!"

The instructor smiled. He looked as pleased as if he had thought of the idea himself. A little stir of applause ran through the group as they expressed their gratitude to their rulers for making this world safe for them.

"Why haven't they been killed before now?" Billy Kasker asked. "These museums were opened over forty years ago. Surely—"

"I don't know about that," the instructor answered. "I think probably our rulers are waiting for a propitious time, or perhaps for an incident that will give them an excuse to carry out their plan."

"I hope they don't wait too long," Joe Buckner said. "Golly, I want to be a *Thorgunner* and get in on the mop-up when it comes!"

The group stirred, seemed to look forward to the day of the final slaughter.

"Any other questions?" the instructor asked.

"I have one," Billy Kasker said hesitantly. "It doesn't exactly have anything to do with our trip through the museum—it's something I ran across in a book—but I don't quite understand it, and I wondered."

"Go right ahead, Billy. What do you have on your mind?"

"Well, ah, did—did you ever hear of a *changeling?* I know it's a kind of a silly question but—"

"A *changeling?*" The instructor frowned.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I think it comes out of a fairy story or something like that," Billy Kasker said.

"Oh, yes. Now I recall the word." The instructor's face lighted. "It's a story about the fairies taking one child from its crib and substituting another for it. The substituted child was called a *changeling*. Or perhaps some poor mother, wishing to give her child a better chance, stole the child of a rich mother and put her child in its place. I really don't remember too much about it."

"Thank you, sir. You have explained it very lucidly."

The instructor beamed.

Joe Buckner sniffed. "Asking a question, then telling the instructor he has explained it very clearly when you didn't even ask a sensible question in the first place—that's what I call sucking in! Who ever heard of a *changeling?*"

The group moved on. They came to the section of the city that had been repaired. The streets had been cleared of the rubble, houses had been rebuilt, and here and there little touches of green grass showed where an attempt to add a touch of beauty had been made.

They saw very few of the natives. Far ahead of them they occasionally glimpsed a native slipping furtively out of the way. Behind them, always at a distance, heads occasionally poked around corners at them.

"They're very cowardly," the instructor said.

"Where's Billy Kasker?" Susan Sidwell suddenly asked.

The group halted. Billy Kasker was no longer following them. A little stir of consternation ran through them as they realized the class president was missing.

"Billy! Billy!" the instructor called.

There was no answer.

"I just don't understand this. He knows he should remain with us."

"Maybe some of these horrible natives grabbed him!" Susan Sidwell said. The group was startled —and suddenly afraid.

The instructor took a deep breath. "I have a *Thor* gun. I'll go find him. Joe, you are in charge of the group until I return. All of you remain in the middle of the street and don't move."

The instructor went back along the street. He was exasperated and a little alarmed. If anything happened to Billy, how could he explain the matter to the gate captain or to Billy's parents?

"Billy!" he called again and again.

Suddenly he had an answer from an alley.

"Here, sir—here I am. Are you looking for me? I'm sorry, sir." Billy himself appeared in the alley.

Reassured at the sight of the youth, but angry, the instructor moved into the alley. "What is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the meaning of this? You have alarmed all of us."

"I'm awfully sorry, sir. But I saw something back here that interested me, and I stopped to take a look. I hope you will forgive me." His manner was so contrite and his chagrin so complete that the instructor had no choice but to forgive him.

"Of course, Billy. But you mustn't do anything like this again. It might be dangerous."

"I won't sir. I promise. But I wonder, since you are here, if you would be good enough to explain to me the thing I saw back here. It will only take a minute."

"What is it?"

"It's something in one of the houses. I came back looking at something else, then caught a glimpse of this. If you will come into the back yard you can see it. I would really like to have you explain it to me, sir. You are always so clear in your explanations." Billy Kasker's manner was very winning.

"Well, if it will only take a minute—" The instructor followed Billy into the back yard. At the rear was a shed with an open window. A plot of grass separated the shed from the house. On the second floor of the house, a window had been shattered.

"There's something up there in that broken window. If you will come here, sir, you can see it better."

"Um. Ah! Oh, yes." The instructor's back was to the open window of the shed. He stared upward at the house.

Two brown-coated arms came out of the window of the shed and clamped a fierce grip around his throat, jerking him backward against the wall. He grabbed frantically for the *Thor* gun.

The face of the brown native appeared in the window of the shed. "Get that gun, Billy!"

Billy Kasker was already in action. He snatched the gun from the instructor's flailing hands.

The brown native leaned from the window. Muscles bulging in his powerful arms, he lifted the instructor upward and through the window. A thump came from inside the shed. Billy Kasker, *Thor* gun ready for use, went through the door.

The instructor was writhing on the floor. The native had a knee on his chest, a knife in his hand.

"This is for the race you *think* you've conquered!" the native said. He plunged the knife into the instructor's throat. Green liquid spurted from the wound.

"Green blood!" the native said. "One of the chemical differences." He came to his feet. The dying instructor was forgotten. The native's hand went out. "Billy, am I glad to see you. I was afraid you wouldn't recognize me in spite of the tune I was whistling as I walked past you on the street."

"I wouldn't forget," Billy Kasker said.

"But, Billy, it's been twelve

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

years since I traded you, as a kid of five, for one of their brats—changing the bracelet as I changed you. Many times since then I've thought you had forgotten, or that I wouldn't live to see the day when you came back here with a graduating class."

"I don't forget," Billy Kasker said. "I'm even class president!" The words burst out of him as if he was still having trouble understanding what they meant.

"That's wonderful, Billy. You're accepted as one of them, but you're one of us all the time. You're in with them, you're set. You have done a wonderful job and I'm proud of you."

The glow in the native's eyes was a wonderful sight to behold. In it there showed the hope of the future for all the conquered natives of this lost planet that had once been called Earth—the faith, the sure knowledge that they would rise again . . . indeed, that they were already rising.

"Thank you! But—" Billy nodded toward the body of the instructor, then spun hastily as a sound came from the rear of the shed, the *Thor* gun coming to focus. A trap door was rising there. Three natives were looking up from under it.

"They're all right," the brown native said quickly. "They're with us."

Three ragged men scrambled up from below. They looked at the brown native, then at the body of the instructor on the floor. A look of fierce exultation appeared on their faces. Then they looked at Billy Kasker and at the *Thor* gun he was holding.

"Give the *Thor* gun to Jim," the brown native said.

Without hesitation Billy Kasker handed the gun to the native who reached for it. Jim did everything but kiss the weapon. "God, the years I've spent dreaming of the moment when I would get one of these babies into my hands! One was all I needed."

"Don't stand there gloating, Jim—get moving," the brown native said. "Within a month I want you not only to know how a *Thor* gun works but to be manufacturing them by the dozens, including the large sizes. This is the gun that has been stopping us all these years—it is the gun that is going to take us out of these pig pens they call museums. Get moving!"

"Yes, sir." Jim was already gone through the trap door.

The brown native jerked off the instructor's clothes, then worked quickly but deftly with his knife. As he finished, the instructor's hand separated from the arm at the wrist.

"He said no one would ever *think* of doing anything like that," Billy Kasker said.

"Nobody but one of us stinking natives." The brown man removed the *plasticum* bracelet, began to work with the fingers of his left hand. "I've spent years learning how to throw my thumb

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

out of joint, just getting ready for the time—"

The plasticum bracelet slipped over the collapsed thumb. It fitted very snugly on his wrist. He held it up.

"Neat, eh. This makes me one of the conquerors."

"A nice fit. But we have very little time. The group will become alarmed."

The second native began to take the instructor's body down the trap door. The brown native swiftly slipped off his clothes and donned the garments the instructor had worn.

"Ed, where's that *Thor* gun model? I've got to have something that looks and feels like a genuine *Thor* gun to turn in at the gate."

"Here it is, sir." The third native handed a gleaming replica of the *Thor* gun to the brown man. He slipped it into the holster. It fitted snugly.

"How do I look, Billy?"

Billy Kasker surveyed the brown native. He was remarkably changed. No longer did he look like one of the natives, he looked like a conqueror. "Just a little higher on the nose with the glasses. And maybe a little less stuffing inside the brim of the hat. But—can you carry off the part of the instructor?"

"I can carry it off or die trying," the brown native said.

"Good!" The two shook hands, then turned and went out the door. As they left, Billy Kasker saw that Ed was mopping the last remnants of the green blood from the floor.

"Perfect, down to the last detail," Billy Kasker said. "You're a genius at planning."

"You have to be a genius to stay alive. Okay, Billy. Here is where we go into our act."

They had moved into the street and the group had seen them. The voice that came from the brown native's mouth was the voice of the instructor, hot and angry.

"Billy, this sort of conduct is intolerable. You know better than to wander off like this. What possible explanation can you offer for your conduct?"

Billy Kasker was very penitent. He was embarrassed, he was humiliated, and he showed both very clearly. He had lost all of his air of easy aplomb. "I'm very sorry, sir. I didn't think—"

"That's just it, you didn't think. You saw nothing in that alley, yet you asked me to come back and look. Is that the way you waste your and my time?"

"It won't happen again, sir," Billy Kasker said contritely.

"See that it doesn't."

"Yah!" Joe Buckner gloated. "This is one time the class president got it in the neck!"

"A very good point you have brought out," the instructor said. "Billy has just demonstrated his unfitness to be class president. I am therefore removing him from this position and appointing you in his stead."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What?" Joe Buckner gasped, giddy with pleasure.

Billy Kasker took his position in line. No longer did he bring up the rear. Joe Buckner now had that position of honor. The group showed some sympathy for Billy, but not very much or very long. When he lost his position as president they seemed to change their minds about him.

The group moved slowly through the city. As if nothing had happened, the instructor explained what they were seeing. When they asked questions, he answered them. Billy Kasker asked no more questions.

They finally came to the gate and the same resplendent captain greeted them. He accepted the *Thor* gun and the holster, handed them to the guard.

"How are things in the museum?"

"Everything is in good order, sir."

"Good. I've had the impression they were getting a little restless lately."

"I saw no signs of it."

"Fine. Did you have any trouble with the group?"

"Very little. Billy Kasker wandered off for a few moments and I had to demote him. But it was nothing. See you next year when I bring another graduating class through to show them around."

The group began to separate to go to their own homes. Billy Kasker lingered a little, to speak to the instructor. "I've already asked my folks, sir, so I know it will be all right with them, so if you would like to come home with me tonight—"

"Hmmmm."

"Trying to suck in again," Joe Buckner said. "It won't do you any good now. You're cooked for good this time!"

Billy Kasker seemed not to hear him. His eyes were on the instructor. "We would be very glad to have you, sir. We could talk about a great many things."

"Why, Billy, in that case I will be glad to come home with you."

They moved away together. "There's one thing I want made completely clear," Billy Kasker said.

"What is that?"

"When the time comes, there is one conqueror I've got on *my* list!"

"That jerk I made class president? Of course, Billy. We will be glad to save him for you alone." The instructor's smile was a happy one.

"Good. That's agreed then." In the gathering dusk, Billy Kasker's voice was as sharp as the edge of a knife driving home into a throat from which green blood spurted. . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE FEMALE INVASION

No longer is it a source of wonder, even to old, died-in-the-wool science fiction readers, this matter of the invasion of the ladies into all fields of human endeavor. Today women work side-by-side with their men on every conceivable job in the world.

One of the last of the fields into which the girls stepped, however, was the realm of story-telling for the science-fiction-fantasy magazines. However, there are such well known names as C. L. Moore, Leigh Brackett, Judith Merril, Katherine MacLean, Evelyn E. Smith and a few others featured in the contents of the magazines of science and fantasy. And there is no reason why this list of feminine names should not grow.

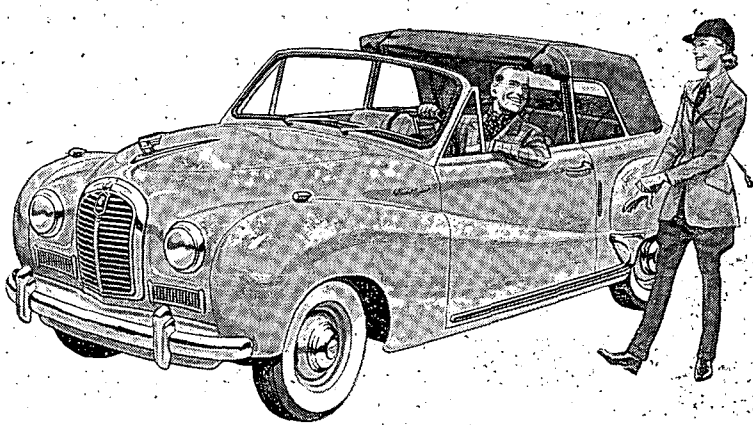
For women, with their intensely imaginative minds, their sensitive understanding of human emotions, are capable of following their men anywhere. More and more women, for instance, are reading the science-fiction magazines. Perhaps they started because they wanted to enjoy the same things their husbands enjoy, to understand another of his enthusiasms. But it is also a fact that although they may try for the first time the things that were formerly exclusively male pursuits with the sole object of pleasing their men or cementing a bond between them, they usually continue their pursuit of the subjects through an interest as keen as that of any man.

So, we expect to number among our readers of FANTASTIC UNIVERSE Science Fiction more and more of the ladies. And we hope to include among the authors on our contents page more and more feminine names.

—The Publisher.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Austin announces a new convertible



This new AUSTIN A-40 "Coupé de Ville" Convertible has a 3-position top that's truly continental. It cruises along at 65, cuts your operating expenses up to 50%, and delivers a good 35 miles per gallon! Underneath its smart exterior, you'll find a steel body that's extra tough. The price is the "pay off"! Only $1945 f. o. b. coastal port of entry including $250 worth of "free" extras and all Federal taxes.

AUSTIN OF ENGLAND

For more information write:
27-29 West 57th Street
New York, New York or
600 Gough Street
San Francisco, California

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED